

# **SHOWMAN**

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**WILLIAM A. BRADY**



# SHOWMAN



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GRACE GEORGE AS LADY TEAGLE  
in "*The School For Scandal*,"  
New Theatre, New York, 1909



WILLIAM A. BRADY  
as a young man  
1894

ALICE BRADY, 1932

# SHOWMAN

WILLIAM A. BRADY

*Illustrated*

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FIRST EDITION

TO MY WIFE





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## *Chapter 1*

LAST YEAR I DID SOME BROADCASTING ABOUT MY DIM AND spotty past, just spinning yarns about this and that back when the nineteenth century was still a going concern. Some youngsters who listened in took the trouble to write letters about it. They sounded discouraged. I'd been lucky, was the burden of their song. There wasn't a chance of doings like those in the modern world. Things seemed to happen earlier and oftener back then.

That set me thinking. Maybe this is a more cut-and-dried world than the one I was raised in. I can't imagine the course of sprouts I went through developing against a twentieth-century background. Details like the fact that I was managing Jim Jeffries in a championship heavyweight fight at Coney Island one Monday evening forty years back and the next evening opened "King Lear" at the Garden Theater in New York starring Robert Mantell, or that among my first flight discoveries during fifty years' search for what the public wanted were Katherine Cornell and James J. Corbett. Those things couldn't happen now. You couldn't hook

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up with the theater and pugilism and the movies and politics as irresponsibly as I did in the process of looking for trouble at my own sweet will. It's no particular credit to me that I had myself such a time. Things were geared that way—you expected anything and everything.

I was certainly educated along those lines. Daytimes I was forcibly fed the three R's in school. But night-times I was up in the gallery of the Old Bowery Theater in New York wallowing in the lushest of melodrama. When I hark back sixty years for a look at myself, I see a scrawny, shabby kid scrunched up on the edge of a hard gallery bench, elbows on knees and eyes hanging out of his head as, fifty feet below, the hero of "Sweeney Todd, the Maniac Barber" dumps another victim out of the trick-barber's chair into the tank of water that fills the maniacal cellar. Or maybe it was "Nick of the Woods" or "Jack Sheppard" or "The Seven Charmed Bullets" or some other standard shrieker of the period of gas-light and blood and thunder. If I happened to have twenty cents, I paid for the privilege of climbing miles of stairs up to the fifth tier. Other times I hung round the gallery doorkeeper till he turned his back and I could slip past him. He carried a shillelagh to discourage such enterprise, but many a kid got by and went kiting up the stairs to have his evening's taste of glory gratis.

The Old Bowery management had its troubles keeping the gallery under control. Upstairs you met another

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man armed with a long bamboo to whack the obstreperous with. But he never got to first base. The proudest moment of my early life was the time I hit the bass-drum with a marble from the top gallery of Booth's Theater on 23rd Street during the sleep-walking scene in "Macbeth." The gallery-patrons had a grudge against the swells down in the orchestra who'd paid as much as seventy cents to get in. If they decided to treat the plutocrats to a shower of marbles or peanuts or programs—a snow-storm of programs like a New York welcome home in the bull-market days—no single human being with a bamboo persuader could do very much about it.

You got your money's worth, whatever you paid. Even after sixty years I felt kind of homeless when the Old Bowery finally burned down. The ordinary bill was a one-act farce—"Box and Cox" or "His Last Legs"—followed by a four- or five-act heavy piece—"Camille" or "Fazio" or "The Lady of Lyons," say—followed by a three-act hair raiser and another farce to wind up with. On manager's benefit nights—a thoughtful custom which I wish was still in vogue—the show was so rich with varied items that it began at 4 P.M. and ran right through to 5 A.M. The acting was pretty free and easy, but expert—rich and juicy, and don't you forget it. And the audience took it just as big as the actors, sobbing in a swelling chorus while Camille was dying and laughing itself into stiches when the comic tried to pull off the old man's whiskers and found they were

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real. It was raw, pure theater—I can taste it yet. No wonder I'm addicted to melodrama the way a Kentucky mountaineer is to plug-tobacco.

Besides, much of my early history sounds like the scenario of an old-time melodrama itself. My father before me had the family weakness for speaking out of turn and getting into hot water. He once barely escaped lynching for letting his scrapping instinct pick the wrong moment to come up for air. During the Civil War he was an ardent secessionist, editor of a San Francisco newspaper which felt the same way and said so out loud. When the news of Lincoln's assassination hit town, mobs collected, looking for secessionists to take it out on. In those days a mob and a lamp-post was San Francisco's automatic reaction to any given situation. They had to bring in troops from Alcatraz—the same place where Al Capone is now cooling his heels—and declare martial law. The other secessionists hunted cover or made tracks out of town. But father chose to climb up on the tail gate of a wagon, just when the mess was at its messiest, and give the mob the rough side of his tongue, attacking the murdered President for going to the theater on a Good Friday.

It may have been a relief to his feelings, but it was not tactful. A detail of soldiers saved him just in the nick of time and whisked him off to a cell in Alcatraz. The mob had to let it go at wrecking his newspaper plant into junk.

I missed that party, being only two at the time and

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fast asleep at home. But I was to play the juvenile to father's lead in his next big scene, which would have been billed on the old programs as:

"THE KIDNAPER'S PLOT  
TORN FROM HIS NURSE'S ARMS  
THE FLIGHT WITH THE \$10,000!!!"

You have to take the consequences of having parents named Brady and O'Keefe. There had been family troubles, ending in divorce with me in the custody of my mother. But father did things about that as soon as he collected \$10,000 damages from the local government for the wrecked printing-plant. My Chinese nurseboy and I had stopped into a drug-store one afternoon—father suddenly rushed in, snatched me into a horse-cab without giving the China-boy a chance to raise a rumpus, and in twenty minutes we were on the Panama boat, bound for New York, well-heeled and regardless. Kidnaped, fleeing the wrath of the law with what was a tremendous sum of money in those days—"The Corsican Brothers" would never seem improbable to a kid who had been through that at the age of six.

Father had struck San Francisco in 1856—a young Dubliner drawn half-way round the world by California gold, which brought so many pioneers so far across the plains and round the Horn. He was a scholar and a gentleman, one of the finest I ever knew—spoke three



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languages fluently and educated me on Shakespeare, which he knew from end to end without book. When we struck New York his California political connections landed him a job in the immigration office at old Castle Garden—now the Aquarium. No Ellis Island then—the immigrant was just looked over and turned loose without complications. Still precautions weren't so necessary then, because the dregs of southern Europe hadn't yet started the big rush for America.

That job didn't last father much longer than the \$10,000. In the end he took to free-lance writing at space-rates—\$10 a column from the old *Herald* was the highest pay with \$3 at the bottom. On occasion he was as brilliant a newspaperman as there was in the country, known, liked and admired. But most of his temperament and some of his habits made those occasions less and less frequent. Some weeks we did fine—other weeks were total washouts. During the off-weeks, it was up to me to keep things going as we slid and wobbled down the skids. Little shaver that I was, I had to sally out of our shabby room on East Broadway and Catherine Street, in the heart of New York's East Side, and rustle whatever cash was rustleable.

I never met the late Horatio Alger, Jr., but he would have liked to meet me. I was no such high-flown prig as his newsboy heroes—I'd have shied a brick at one in real life—but if anybody ever went through the whole mill of the traditional how-to-get-along-on-the-cold-streets-of-a-great-city racket, I was that somebody.



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As times got worse and worse with father, my assignment got tougher. Plenty of times I sat hungry and shivering in an unheated room, waiting for father to come home with bad news and crying myself to sleep when he didn't. Going to school daytimes didn't help the empty place in your stomach much, but at least the school-room was heated.

Of course, I sold newspapers. I can't remember ever having a new suit during this period, so I must have been ragged and skimpy enough to play the newsboy to perfection. I shined shoes over week-ends. Everybody on the East Side had his weekly shine on Saturday. Saturday was the big day for fire-building too—a job peculiar to the East Side. We lived right in the Jewish district, full of Orthodox Jewish immigrants whose religion prohibited them from doing any work at all on Saturday—their Shabus—not even putting a stick of wood on the fire. So the Irish kids in the neighborhood, who had no such disabilities, cashed in with a stoking-service at ten cents per fire per day. I can still hear the old ladies with shawls over their heads squalling out of the windows: “Where’s that Batzuma boy Brady? Tell him to come up and put some wood on the fire.” And, when things were lowest, I could raise a few cents by selling old newspaper to a ragman. Old newspaper was the only thing we ever had plenty of. Father had to see out-of-town newspapers for his work, so almost daily I went and stole as many Cincinnati *Enquirers* and New Orleans *Picayunes* and Baltimore

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*Suns* and such as I could out of the bin in the old *Herald* building basement where they were dumped after the news-editor was through with them. The old Irishman who stood guard over them knew what those papers meant to us. When I appeared, sneaking in, he always turned his back or sauntered out for a moment.

But that's a gloomier note than I want to strike. I had my fun too. It was only a few minutes from our room over a beer-saloon to Chatham Square where the Bowery began, and times were seldom dull for a Bowery kid. There's been a lot of guff written and talked about the Bowery. People have tried to whitewash it, tried to make it out worse than it was, shot off their mouths about it right and left without ever knowing what they were talking about. The Bowery was shabby, drunken and tough, but it wasn't anything like as vicious as modern Broadway. In those times toughness hadn't yet moved uptown and mingled with Broadway and gone flashy. In the '70s, the Bowery and Broadway were separate worlds. When we Bowery kids ventured uptown into the legitimate theatrical district between Spring Street and 23rd Street the cops chased us away as if we'd been red Indians. And when Broadway had to come down to the Bowery, it put a gun in its pocket. The gun probably wasn't necessary, but that was the attitude.

Our fun was pretty rigorous sometimes. By the time we were ten we'd split up into warring gangs. A sudden

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outbreak of a boys' gang feud would clear the streets for several blocks. Rocks flying, windows smashing, the cops arriving—a little war springing up out of nothing and, as soon as a uniform was visible dying down into nothing again, with not a boy in sight. I still have a scar on my cheekbone from a brick and another under my chin where a rock ricocheted up from the pavement and clipped me a good one. We were always on hand for grown-up trouble too. That was the way I got in on the famous Orangemen's riot on the 12th of July. The annual Orangemen's celebration of the Battle of the Boyne always started a riot, but this was a particularly fine one. They called out the Ninth Regiment to restore order, with Jubilee Jim Fiske, their colonel, riding at the head in a uniform that was even harder on the eye than the one he wore as admiral of the Fall River Line. But somebody took him with a rock right over the eye and, in less time than it takes to tell it, Col. Fiske was off his horse, over a fence and through a backyard into the next avenue, leaving the regiment to clear the streets as best they could.

We were all crazy about the theater, and so were our elders. Boxing was interesting but outlawed, baseball undeveloped—the pitching was done underhand and a hundred runs a game was quite common. The theater was the whole thing. Down round Broadway and Houston Street, the center of the big variety houses, every theater had a saloon next door and outside every saloon loafed the famous stars of the day—

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Ed Harrigan, Tony Hart, Nat Goodwin, Billy Barry, Johnny Wild—with their admirers standing on the sidewalk and gaping at them—something highly enjoyable for both parties. Every kid who could talk was always spouting “My kingdom for a horse” and “Lay on, Macduff” and showing how this and that actor got it off. We talked about the actual hanging scene in “Neck for Neck” the way the boys in the barber shop discuss the world-series now. And one of the things that decided Public School Number Two to abandon my education was the way I used to break up all the pointers in the place performing the last act of “Macbeth,” when I was kept in at noon for disciplinary purposes.

We were theatrical connoisseurs from the cradle. The small fry in the Old Bowery gallery had strict theories of how the villain ought to die, when the hero did him in in the final scene. The old melodrama villains had a specialized technique for kicking the bucket—elbows stiff, spine rigid, then fall over backward square on the back of your head. It took skill to do it right and not kill yourself in good earnest. We all practiced it—I’ve spent hours bruising myself to a pulp practicing a villain’s fall. And we valued villains in direct proportion to the stiffness of their falls. When J. B. Studley, a fine old-time actor, started doing villains at the Old Bowery and tried dying like a human being—a natural sprawling collapse—the whole house came right over the footlights at him with hisses and cat-calls and roars of protest—they wanted a real fall. It wasn’t till Stud-

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ley had learned to stiffen up and crash in the conventional way—and he got to be one of the best fallers in the business—that they'd tolerate him at all.

Naturally we ran our own theaters, penny-theaters in abandoned cellars, equipped with a rough staging and broken-down benches and chairs, operated with juvenile casts. Black-face acts were the rage then—it was the heyday of the minstrel shows, the San Francisco Minstrels with their great trio of Birch, Wambold and Backus. I had a go at black-face myself—in a negro farce called "Where's the Boss?" which another fellow and I picked for our appearance at an amateur night at Miner's Theater—and got the hook in due course. But in my own penny-theater in a Division Street cellar I was already following my bent. I produced melodrama as thick with murder, ransom, "the papers," foundling children, disguises, duels and mysterious strangers as the boards of my stage would carry. Weber and Fields, Sam Bernard, Julian Rose, were only a few top-notchers who started in East Side penny-theaters, with amateur nights as the first step up. Nobody ever made a nickel's profit out of a penny-theater—I know I didn't. But I was only a kid when I found myself turning a profit on a real venture into giving the theater-going public what it wanted.

It was Count Johannes who gave me the break. If you still remember Count Johannes—way back in the '70s, mind—I wish you'd tell me whether he was a clever faker or the most pathetic case of egomania in



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theatrical history—which is saying a lot. Anyway he was certainly the worst actor I ever saw, and that's saying a lot too. They howled him off the stage when he first appeared in New York, playing Hamlet at the old Academy of Music—the howl being half laughter and half indignation. When he struck the Old Bowery a little later, its patrons had already heard of him and were waiting zestfully—a full house. The management, knowing its customers, had stretched a net across the stage, but not high enough to shield the Count from the plunging fire of the galleries. As soon as the Count got going on “Angels and ministers of grace defend us,” the gallery let him have it—carrots, eggs and tomatoes. The Count plowed right ahead, evidently used to bombardments. But the ghost wasn't—when a carrot popped him in the eye, the spooky majesty of Denmark gathered up an armful of ammunition from the stage and rushed before the net to return fire with pretty accurate results.

From then on every scene was climaxed with another bombardment. The Count kept his end up all through, particularly by raising Cain when his leading lady—an actress named Avonia Fairbanks, who was almost as big a clown, conscious or unconscious, as he was—came in for the audience's attentions. “Get thee to a nunnery,” says he to Ophelia, and a patron in a stage-box chips in with “Don't you pay no attention to him, honey,” so the Count steps out of character to bawl the patron out—result, more eggs, tomatoes, carrots and

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general hullabaloo. Cabbages were flying toward the end. During the graveyard scene, the Count picked up a cabbage instead of Yorick's skull, held it out toward the audience and amended Shakespeare for the customers: "Alas, poor cabbagehead," he said, "gaze upon thy brothers out there!" That drew fish-heads, riper eggs and more cabbages.

The Bowery hadn't had such a swell time since the Civil War draft riots. Night after night the Count played Hamlet and the boys kept up the fun. They were happy and so was the Count, because his Hamlet was actually outdrawing Edwin Booth's playing in competition at the Academy of Music. A swell speculation for him and the management both. He made such a good thing out of being a theatrical Aunt Sally that he had imitators—a Dr. Landis who specialized in "Richard III" behind a net, and another named James Owen O'Connor—I guess O'Connor wasn't altogether faking it, since he proved his having a screw loose by dying in an insane asylum. The famous Cherry Sisters act of a later day, as well as the old-fashioned amateur night—revived last year by Major Bowes—was just a development of the gags the Count started. He died rich, they tell me.

He was a gold-mine for me as well as for himself. Every evening I'd lay in a big basket of defunct vegetables and eggs down at the produce-markets for practically nothing and then go work the sidewalk in front of the Old Bowery entrance: "Here y'are, gents—fruit,

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vegetables and rare old eggs to throw at the actors!" It was no trick at all to clear a couple of dollars a night. Horatio Alger would have been proud of my enterprise.

Not that Alger invented the ragged newsboy with the heart of gold and the sterling honesty of Abraham Lincoln. That manly little fellow was a stock character in the old melodrama way back—he always made a tremendous hit with the Bowery audience, always foiled the villain by overhearing his plot and dying a hero's death in consequence. But it was too much like a scene out of one of the old plays the night I got the willies. The setting was stock stuff too—just like a lot of other nights—miserable little room—cold—father not home yet—nothing to eat and not a dime to buy anything with—nothing to do but try to go to sleep. But I couldn't go to sleep. I was too scared to cry. I knew something had gone terribly wrong, and I just lay and shivered, although I'd been in that situation plenty of times before. When morning came, I saw in the papers that an unidentified man had fallen dead in the street. I didn't need the description to know who it was. I hardly needed to go down to the morgue to realize why father hadn't come home at all.

The old-time newspaperman was no more of an angel than the modern kind, but he had a great sense of loyalty to his own breed. Terence Brady's kid, grown to a skinny bantam-weight of fifteen, was duly accommodated with a snug berth as day-steward of the New



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York Press Club in its rooms over a Centre Street beer saloon. It was a good place for continuing your education. There was a billiard table and nothing to do between seven A.M., the opening hour and noon, when the first member blew in for the first today. In consequence I became a crack billiard player, which enabled me at a later period to do very well as a "come-on" in an Omaha booze and gambling joint. (The "come-on" was an innocent looking loafer in the pay of the management who beguiled suckers into high stakes by clumsy playing and then wiped the table with them.) And then you may remember the forged "Morey letter" which almost defeated Garfield in the campaign of 1880—a letter over his signature advocating unlimited Chinese immigration. Well, I saw that letter composed and the signature forged one quiet night in the Press Club, and I still don't think it would be tactful to give the names of the authors.

The Press Club took in all kinds, not just newspapermen, for it was the Lambs, the Players, the Lotos, all rolled into one, and the logical headquarters of every big man who struck town. I have opened the door for and checked the coats of—actors?—well, Edwin Booth, Lawrence Barrett, Lester Wallack—writers?—Mark Twain, Dion Boucicault, Joseph Howard, Jr., the Heywood Brown of his time—politicians?—Grover Cleveland, Chester A. Arthur, James G. Blaine, Roscoe Conklin—miscellaneous celebrities?—Henry Ward Beecher, Charles A. Dana, Mayor A. Oakey Hall,

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Ward McAllister, John Morrissey, the celebrated pugilist-politician-publican. After a month on that job I'd just have yawned at seeing Julius Caesar having a couple of drinks with Alexander the Great.

Cleveland almost got me fired off my job early one morning, turning up after getting off a train. "Hello, Willie," he said, "nobody here?" I said, "No, sir." "Then," says he, "I'd like to kill a little time with billiards if you'll play with me." We were hard at it when another member walked in, a mortal enemy of mine named Doyle, who always arrived early in the morning to make sure I wasn't soldiering on the job—which I usually was. He was outraged at the spectacle of the steward playing billiards with a distinguished member, and it was only the distinguished member's spirited defense that saved my neck. It wasn't difficult to get your tail in a crack on that job. One rainy night, when I ran out to hold an umbrella over Chester A. Arthur as he stepped from his cab, he gave me a five-dollar bill. I bragged about it to the club-manager, who insisted on asking the great man if there hadn't been some mistake. "There certainly is," said Mr. Arthur. "That wasn't a tip—it was to get a new umbrella with. The one he has leaks like a sieve."

But I didn't miss the five. Smaller tips came along in flocks, and I was branching out into profitable sidelines—rushing copy to newspaper offices, for instance, at four bits a trip. Presently that developed into an informal messenger service between Gilmore's Garden,

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which had started as a car-barn and then was rebuilt into the old Madison Square Garden, where the big sporting events took place, and the club. My East Side pals hot-footed it to me with frequent summaries of what was going on, and I sent hourly bulletins to the papers, at thirty cents per. If there was something big doing, like the famous International Six-Day go-as-you-please between Dan O'Leary, the pride of Ireland, and Charlie Rowell, the English bull-dog, that meant a couple of hundred dollars for me. Eventually I was averaging a hundred a week, rain or shine. Horatio's boy was making good a lot faster than Dan O'Leary ever heel-and-toed it round a ring. But, just when things were going great, my friend Doyle caught me late several mornings and got me fired. I still love that fellow like a brother.

I went West. Young fellows did those times, just as Horace Greeley advised them to. That's an opportunity the modern generation is missing plenty. There's nowhere to go to grow up with the country. Besides, I was born there—I felt the West owned me and I was scheduled to own it and my stay in New York was just a preliminary bout. There was a fellow named Jerome taking over a newspaper in Omaha who promised to get me a job out there. The Press Club wangled me a railroad pass, but Jerome cabbaged that and sent me via a second-class railroad to save money.

The job turned out to be "peanut-butcher" on an emigrant train out of Omaha. Emigrant trains didn't

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carry only emigrants—they were just the cheapest way of traveling west, used by everybody who was short of cash. Likewise the peanut-butcher didn't sell just peanuts—he was a general store on two legs. Reading-matter, groceries, hardware, notions, tobacco, candy, bedding for the hard wooden boards from seat to seat that the passengers slept on—everything but yard-goods. For the customers in the sleeping-cars the butcher stocked guide-books, expensive and thoroughly useless souvenirs such as fancy little boxes full of mineral specimens, and anything else people with money would be expected to bite at. You could work off an awful lot of that kind of junk on prosperous drunks and the prices you charged were as much as you dared ask over and above the company's bookkeeping price. The difference went into your pocket.

It was a good job and the butcher was a big figure on the train. When you got off at the end of the run in some small town and went strutting round the streets with your little cap on the side of your head, people nudged each other and whispered who you were and how much money you made. At the height of my game, I was selling \$400 a week at a 20% commission, which figures out to something.

The job wanted cockiness, a loud voice, presence of mind, and a sense of the dramatic, all of which I had acquired on the Bowery. My methods were all my own. I'd come bursting into the car with my stock-in-trade, strike an Old Bowery attitude and get the attention of

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every bored passenger instantly by spouting Shakespeare, as father had taught me to roll it out during cold evenings when we wanted to forget our empty stomachs: "Now is the winter of our discontent / Made glorious summer by this son of York" perhaps, or "Most potent grave and reverential signors / My very noble and approved good masters." Then I went into my spiel and passed down the aisle, tossing boxes of candy and such into the awed customers' laps.

That worked the finest kind on white people. I had another technique for Chinamen, of whom there were plenty farther west, always forced to ride in the smoker for one reason and another. When working a Chinaman, I'd drop a gold-piece on the seat beside him, call his attention to it and then palm it up my sleeve, making it appear and disappear before his mystified eyes. A little of that would mesmerize him into buying things he didn't even know the name of. I lost the San Francisco-Ogden run, one of the fattest in the country, because that failed to work on one disagreeable Chink. He didn't wait for my act—he grabbed the coin, a double-eagle, and swore it was his. When I saw he meant business, I swung on him. When I swung on him, he flashed a long, skinny knife from somewhere in the slack of his clothes and started for me. Other passengers held him back and kicked him off the train. I didn't need much holding back after a look at the high-lights on that knife-blade. But I wasn't supposed to be taking pokes at passengers, Chinamen or not, so



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for twenty dollars I lost the best job I'd had to date. I felt much worse about that than I had about a previous firing for losing my entire stock-in-trade playing stud with what I took to be a greenhorn passenger.

My taste for gambling always kept me broke, and some of my dodges in hard times were pretty unpleasant. I've waited on table, delivered papers, been a come-on in a saloon-gambling joint as I mentioned before, been arrested as a vagrant after a night in a filthy ten-cent lodging-house and ordered to leave town. Once I tried beating my way to the coast blind baggage, but North Platte was as far as I got—a bitter winter night and the thought of the snowy Rockies up ahead, plus the comfort of a red-hot stove in a section-house, made me turn back. It was just as well I did, since at Omaha I found a pass to San Francisco and a check for fifty dollars waiting for me—compliments of the New York Press Club, to which I'd written in desperation months back. It's no wonder I've always had a soft spot for newspapermen.

Much of that may not strike you as training for the theater. No more it was—which was why I felt dissatisfied with such a hit or miss existence. Otherwise I'd probably have gone right on with odd jobs, gambling away everything I earned and having a fine time. But San Francisco in the early eighties was the maddest of all the theater-mad towns in America—the atmosphere that produced Edwin Booth and John McCullough and Lotta Crabtree. After the Press Club pass

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wafted me there, I earned my living running a news-stand at Kearney and Market Streets, but I spent all my spare time chasing the theatrical will-of-the-wisp, trying to shove and elbow my way into contact with stages and plays and actors.

It was in the air. San Francisco was still producing embryonic stage figures. There was a homely little boy who sold matches in front of my news-stand, a pathetic little shrimp, never fresh, with a plaintive winning smile for everybody and a talent for imitating famous actors every time I got him encouraged to mount a soap-box and display it. He hung round theaters just as I did, sneaking into the gallery, haunting stage-doors, getting laughed at when he applied for theatrical jobs. That little cuss was David Warfield. Years later I gave him his first big chance and saw him turn into one of the great character actors of his day. At the same time young David Belasco was scraping the chins of the customers in his father's San Francisco barber shop and dreaming theater like all the rest of us—us meaning people like that grand old performer, the late Thomas A. Wise, and Congressman Sol Bloom and Al and Alf Hayman, the founders of the great pre-war theatrical syndicate, all San Francisco kids in my day.

I don't know what they do nowadays, since there's so little theater to break into, but in my time one way for youngsters of normal stature to start a theatrical education was to carry a spear. Most of the big touring

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companies that hit town carried only principal actors, depending on local volunteers at four bits a night for supernumeraries—armies, mobs, citizenry and such. Lots of poor souls “suped” at that rate to keep what was left of body and soul together. I don’t deny that, even in my own case, fifty cents was often a welcome addition to the seven dollars a week I got for selling papers. But mainly I was suping for the sake of getting under my betters’ feet and keeping eyes and ears open. A super had a versatile career without half trying—I’ve gone on as a soldier, a sailor, a hoodlum, a jail-bird, a burglar, a stage-door johnny, a Chinaman, and a medieval swash-buckler in high boots and rattling rapier. I’ve played Indians of every known tribe and some tribes that never existed outside a hack dramatist’s imagination. Wild-western plays were just getting into their stride then—the country had waked up with a bang and a whoop to the joys of the cowboy and Indian business—and every time a production of “Wild Bill” or “Texas Jack” came to town, there I was, dyked out in war paint and feathers, doing my best to carry out the stage-manager’s idea of a war dance.

Presently, besides, I’d edged my way into one of those theatrical clubs of amateurs which during that period infested not only San Francisco but New York and New Orleans and Chicago and Baltimore. In those times each big town was a theatrical center in its own right, with its own producers, authors, supply of actors



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and sense of importance. These amateur outfits were always hoping to put on a good enough performance to leave a little margin for costumes and scenery in the next production. That seldom happened—cash was always extremely scarce. But I had the advantage of knowing the property man of the California Theater, which made me the only channel through which my club could hope to borrow a Mississippi steam-boat set for their forthcoming production of Boucicault's old drama, "The Octoroon." My terms were met. It was easy to blarney the property man and arrange my end of the deal, but their end looked pretty shaky along about curtain-time. Business out front was definitely bad and I was almost as dubious about my five dollars as they were.

So I organized a one-man strike. I refused to go on and knife the villain until the money was put in my hand. An understudy was out of the question since the audience had already seen me in earlier scenes. I held all the cards in the deck and stuck to my guns, no matter how earnestly the company pled and argued and threatened in the wings. My cue arrived but the five dollars did not. There was the villain groveling in the swamp, wild with terror of red-skin vengeance on his trail, but the red-skin was holding out for his dough. Our off-stage argument was picturesquely punctuated by the villain's ad-libbings: "He's coming!" we heard, "He's after me—he's on my trail—I hear him nearer—and nearer—and nearer—" As a matter of fact,

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it wasn't me, it was the five dollars that was coming nearer. Not until it arrived did I make my vengeful entrance and grapple with him. By that time he was raving angry and took a lot of killing. The audience got three-quarters of a real fight for their money and it was the hit of the evening.

Suping, semi-professional amateur dramatics—this was hanging on the edge. I thought I had my chance to leap to the professional side of the foot-lights when Bartley Campbell, the well-known author-producer, arrived in San Francisco with half-a-dozen New York actors, to put on his famous melodrama, "The White Slave." It didn't have anything to do with commercialized vice, by the way—our public wouldn't have stood for that—it dealt with the troubles of another octoroon, and its famous lines were an exchange of compliments between the heroine and the brutal overseer: "You shall work in the fields," says he, with a sneering chuckle, "a hoe in your hands and rags on your back." Her answer had already rung out with tremendous effect over most of the nation: "Rags are royal raiment when worn for virtue's sake and rather a hoe in my hand than self-contempt in my heart." You still hear that line, but I bet you didn't know where it came from, any more than you know that "and the villain still pursued her" was the curtain line of each scene in another old play, "The Phoenix."

Campbell had his principals with him, but the minor roles were to be distributed among San Fran-

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cisco's home-grown performers. He didn't know me from a hole in the ground, but I knew him because he'd been round the Press Club now and again. So I waylaid him on the way to the theater, made it clear that he ought to remember me even if he didn't and let him know that I was an actor—not too much of a lie under the circumstances. "That's interesting," he said. "Come round to rehearsal tomorrow." And the next morning, with Campbell seated at a table on the stage and the New York principals lounging majestically round and a hoard of local professionals waiting for a chance at a job, the first name called was: "Mr. Brady." Much mystification among the local talent—who the devil was Brady? Brady? Never heard of him. I walked across the stage and got two parts—boy in the first act, aged tramp in the fourth. There were whispered consultations and a rebellious appeal to one of the New York stars. I knew what it was all about. Somebody had recognized me and there was trouble over seeing a newsboy easing his way into a job intended for a real actor. Presently Campbell crossed over to me and took the two parts from my hand: "Sorry, Brady," he said, "I hear you aren't quite what you represented yourself." Then, getting the full effect of my crestfallen look, "Wait until after rehearsal," he said.

I waited. After rehearsal I found he hadn't held it against me. My crust had probably amused him. At least I got a job—my first theatrical job—call-boy at

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ten dollars a week. I knew there would be plenty of grins among the professional cast as I trotted round and knocked at their doors backstage, but I grabbed at it anyway.

In two weeks I had my reward, one of those things that fiction is full of and occasionally do happen in the theater. Max Freeman, playing Natchez Jim, the Mississippi gambler, took sick just before a performance. The house was full to bursting and the idea of calling off the show and returning perfectly good money was always repugnant to any right-thinking company. Natchez Jim had to be a scowling, staggering bad man with a streak of pure gold at bottom. He tackles the brutal overseer who was always pursuing the heroine: "By what right do you interfere?" asks the overseer. "By the right to see fair play," thunders Natchez Jim. "And by the eternal this little girl's going to have it." Then he snatches a lighted lantern, throws it down a hatch-way, the steam-boat catches fire and the act ends on a big smoke and flames effect.

One after another the Pacific Coast actors were tried and failed. I wasn't exactly the type—skinny and short, weighing 125 pounds at the time—but, when nobody else could read the lines right, I pulled Campbell's coat-tails and looked pleading. His being at his wits' end was the only reason for giving me a crack at it. I growled and shouted through the lines: "Go make up," he says. William H. Thompson, that fine old actor, snatched me down to his dressing-room and

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plastered on my twitching face the first pair of whiskers it had ever met.

On I went. After my big scene the principals were taking their bows as usual—with a gap in the center of the line where Freeman always stood. I was sure I'd done fine although it wasn't likely anyone else thought so too, so I sneaked up-stage and hid in a dark corner. But Georgia Cayvan, one of America's famous leading women, came and rooted me out and led me into the middle of the line. "Take your bow, little man," she said, "you've earned it." I took that bow as big as the star tenor of a grand opera and I was Natchez Jim for the run of the play.

That made me an actor. It also gave me a swelled head that wouldn't have gone through a man-hole without shoving. As I strutted down the street in a new checked suit, black and white as a jack-rabbit, swinging my hand to get a feeble sparkle out of the infinitesimal diamond I bought when they raised me to twenty dollars a week, I must have been something to see.

When Campbell's company closed up, I was drafted off to Sacramento to help put on Campbell's plays in the company of an old-timer named Joseph R. Grismer. Not bad for a kid with just one season's experience. I was supposed to be the "utility-man" of Grismer's troupe. A utility-man in baseball is hired to play short, third, second or first and take a tour in the outfield on occasion. A utility-man in the old theater would have



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considered that childishly simple. In my time I have played six roles in one evening and acted as stage-manager to boot. I had to be up to any kind of role, serious or comic, fat part or walk-on, male or female for that matter—the part of Madame Frochard in “The Two Orphans” was a favorite of mine—when there was nobody else to do it. Many a night I’ve died in Monte Cristo’s arms as the Abbé Faria and then jumped behind the scenes, shed the Abbé’s gown and whiskers in eight bars of music and gone on again in the palace scene as Fernand the villain. Playing that as a front scene gave them a chance to set the big ocean scene where Dantes is thrown into the sea and climbs up on a rock while we all pelted rock-salt at him to make realistic spray. “Mine are the treasures of Monte Cristo!” he sings out. “The world is mine!” Can’t you hear me calling, James O’Neill?

Grismer trouped in the good old-fashioned way—mining camps, cross-roads—I swear I think we played places the mail didn’t get to till ten years afterwards, using lodge-halls, dining-rooms, skating-rinks and school-houses for theaters. You could hardly say Spokane existed yet, although we played it, and I think we were the first theatrical company ever to plunge into the wilds of Montana. I suppose Butte was the biggest place in the state then and it was still in that stage of all plan and no realization which prompted a sardonic citizen to suggest that, now the city fathers had laid the place out, its friends had better come and bury it.

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We got as far east as Salt Lake City. The Mormons were always crazy about the theater, so business was good. Mormon amateur theatrical companies in those days were about the best I've ever seen—they didn't have to take any back-talk from the professionals. Brigham Young, the old founder himself, had been the biggest theatrical bug of them all. He owned the theater and was always trotting backstage to talk to the actors in his day—and, since he always came bringing the whole family, the place wouldn't have lacked patronage if nobody else had gone. He was dead when I got there, but I've seen four boxes filled with his children alone. Things were going even better than before because his successor had been equally prolific, was equally stage-struck, and always brought all *his* family too.

If Grismer hadn't been so stubby, he'd have been a famous star. A grand actor—master of every trick in the theater and an iron-bound disciplinarian. You walked chalk in his companies. And I walked cheerfully because I was learning the game under expert guidance. In the intervals of going on as Bermudas in "Under the Gaslight," and furnishing the motor power of the engine that came thundering down on the hero lashed to the track, and doing the first gravedigger in "Hamlet" with other such regular assignments, I poked my nose into so many odd jobs that the company called me "the handyman." I worked the props and moved the scenery on occasion. When we



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were staging new plays I wrote out the parts in long-hand. I hung round the gallery door to see that the doorkeeper put the tickets in the box instead of his pocket. I put out daily dodgers announcing the night's bill and, before we left town, collected our lithographs from shop-windows to be used again somewhere else. I understudied several of the leading actors in all their repertory and used my spare time—what there was of it—in rehearsing. That was the way to get training.

My eyes were always peeled for an opportunity to pull a ballyhoo stunt on the buying public. Grismer paid well for inspirations. In Seattle, our 4th of July matinee was in a bad spot because a balloon ascension was scheduled for the same afternoon in a vacant lot in the center of town. We could have announced that the ghost of John Wilkes Booth was going to dance on the slack wire and still Seattle wouldn't have been distracted from that balloon ascension. I tackled Grismer: "What do I get if I stand them up for you?" "Twenty-five dollars," he said, gloomily secure in promising so much.

In five minutes I was over at the scene of the big doings. The daring aeronaut was busy with the delicate job of inflating his balloon, so I was safe in mounting a box at the other corner of the lot and giving tongue:

"Ladies and gentlemen," I told those teeming hundreds—thousands wouldn't do for Seattle in those days—"I have been requested by the balloonist to announce that the ascension has been postponed until five P.M.

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so you can all attend the matinee performance of 'The Two Orphans' at the Seattle Theater. He strongly recommends both cast and play." Then I moved to another corner and repeated. At the third corner the balloonist caught me red-handed and booted me off the lot—if he'd carried a gun, I wouldn't be here today—but the damage was done and the ascension was duly postponed for lack of audience. I lost my twenty-five dollars at faro late the same night, but it was a satisfaction to have earned it so brilliantly.

The company wardrobe included some convict suits of stripes and a couple of policemen's uniforms, which inspired me to work up a gag that became a standard item in our ballyhoo program. In each town I hired four loafers, two for convicts, two for policemen, and sent them streaking down the main street at just the right moment before the performance—the convicts running for dear life, the police after them with barking revolvers—only blanks, of course, but lots of noise. Everybody in town who wasn't bedridden would stam-pede along to see the fun. The convicts ducked into the theater-lobby, the police following, and, when the crowd arrived, I met them with a ten-minute salvo of spieling about the glories of our company and the beauties of that evening's bill. It always tickled them to have been so dramatically hoaxed, and business would be good.

There was some danger, of course, that an over-excited or conscientious westerner would unlimber

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his gun and wing one of our convicts in a misguided effort to aid the police. That never happened, however, while I was managing the stunt. The only trouble I had with it came from the actors who had to wear the costumes—they were pretty choosy about the kind of local citizens I selected. And you couldn't always fix things to suit. In Winnemucca, Nevada, I remember, the white population turned me down cold, and the best I could do was hire four Paiute Indians. I suppose the Paiutes are as noble savages as any, but there was no denying that they deserved the reputation they had throughout the West of being the favorite camping-grounds of all the different kinds of insects that prefer human society. When our actors, sitting on the hotel porch with their feet on the railing, saw their costumes come kiting down the street with four lousy Paiutes inside of them, they reacted pretty violently. Their first move was to a drug-store to buy all the insecticide in town. Their second move was to the theater to shake their fists under my nose and ask for an explanation.

There was only one end of the ballyhoo department that I didn't partake in—the activity known in those days as “doubling in brass.” We and most other troupes always hit town with a brass-band procession down the main street, the band continuing to play in front of the theater until a short time before the performance. The racket raised by a couple of cornets, a trombone, a tuba, a clarinet, a French horn, a snare-drum and a bass-drum made certain that every soul in the place, whole- or

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half-witted, flush or broke, knew there was a show in their midst. That was a minimum number of bandsmen and no such troupe as ours could afford to pay even one extra person. So you can see why the barnstorming trouser had to be a fair performer on something that went boom-boom or tootle-toot or umpha-umph as well as an actor, and why "must be able to double in brass" was as standard a line in the old theatrical advertisements in the *Clipper* as "write stating salary" and "a good dresser on and off stage." Many an actor and manager who was to become a name to conjure with has had to blow his soul into the small end of a slip-horn to advertise a performance of "Uncle Tom's Cabin" or "The Streets of New York" at the Town Hall tonight.

But a dusty street in a small western town, a blistering sun and the exertion of manipulating a tuba or a bass-drum made a bad combination. I was a pretty good performer on the snare-drum, but I always kept quiet about it, merely indicating that if I had to be in the band, I had a kind of acquaintance with that instrument. And I drummed dutifully—but outrageously out of time with no more roll than you'd get out of drumming on a fur cap. Within a hundred yards the leader would be showing distress signals, the populace on the sidewalk trying to keep time would be hooting derisively and, at the end of the parade, my drum would be taken firmly from me and I would be enjoined never again to pollute the band with my ungodly lack of

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rhythmical sense. That suited me the finest kind. From then on I could seek out a cool bar-room as soon as we got off the train or, what I liked even better, stroll along the shady side of the street with my hat on the side of my head, watching my colleagues perspiring musically out in the middle and having people in the crowd point me out to one another as one of the big men in the company.

It was a tremendous feeling. I think I can see what those youngsters' letters were getting at.



## *Chapter II*

SOMETIMES THE ACTOR OF THE EIGHTIES WORE HIS DIAMOND in his shirt-front. Other times the diamond went into temporary retirement at Uncle's and the only reason he retained the shirt-front was that he had to have something to cover a thoroughly empty stomach. One of my advantages in my new profession lay in the fact that I had been broken in to occasional short rations ever since I could remember clearly. For, if you couldn't starve well on occasion, you didn't belong in the old-time theater. But even somebody with my long experience never learned to like it. The first actors' strike I ever heard of in which the strikers stuck together and won their point came about because we members of a theatrical company in San Francisco couldn't stand the spectacle of our manager eating hearty when all we ever got was an occasional quarter to buy some beans with.

The company was stony-broke. The manager hadn't seen any money for weeks either, but his credit was still good at an excellent French chophouse on Bush Street. Every day they reserved him a table for dinner right in the window—he had the characteristic theatrical fond-



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ness for dining in the public eye, and this was a regular show-case. Every evening at six o'clock he made his entrance majestically, sat down and ordered and read the paper while his order was preparing—he was very careful indeed to ignore the sight of his actors who, fascinated by his effrontery, were standing outside on the sidewalk peering in at him with the expressions appropriate to wolves round a camp-fire.

Tension began to mount when we sighted the waiter staggering out from the kitchen under a heavy tray. It grew to dangerous heights as the waiter unloaded on the manager's table—he was a portly man and took a lot of refreshment. A thick, juicy steak was his customary order, crowned with half a pound or so of fried onions, half hidden under a heap of fried potatoes, washed down by a pint of coffee and followed along by a piece of pie so wide and thick that the plate it rested on was hardly visible. You could fairly smell it through the plate glass. And he made no effort to spare us the agony of watching him work. He would bend his nose over the platter, sniff up an odor so rich that it would have been a meal in itself, tuck up his cuffs with gloat-ing deliberation and dive in with a gusto that made the spectators writhe and moan.

The restaurant management used bad judgment in planting him so conspicuously in the window—it's a wonder one of us famine-victims outside didn't heave a cobblestone through the glass and follow in after it with a club. After that had been going on for some



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time, the company got together and signed their names to a solemn oath, copied after the round robin customary among mutinous sailors, refusing to go on that night or any other night until we got some of the seven weeks' salary that was owing us. They picked me as spokesman to put the works to the manager. I didn't relish the job, but there was very little to lose and maybe a square meal to gain. So I marched into the box-office and accosted the enemy as pompously as you can with your stomach caving in against your backbone.

Our position could be clearly stated in words of one syllable. No pay, no play. It took him some five minutes to get the idea even so. He said he'd never heard of actors having the effrontery to strike. I said neither had I, but there it was and we meant business. He didn't argue the point further—he just called in a couple of uniformed attendants and instructed them to throw me out before he was tempted to soil his own hands on me. I picked myself up from the lobby-floor and went round to the stage-door to report to my fellow-conspirators that the Rubicon was crossed and it was war to the knife. There was no performance that night, nor for a week to come, and when we showed every determination of holding out for life, the manager knuckled under and ponied up. I don't know yet where he raised the money—all I knew or cared about was that it was perfectly good money and bought the lot of us a swell feed to celebrate with and something to spare. I've had

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many a good meal during a long lifetime, but nothing that ever quite approached that.

It was the manager's own fault. We'd never have carried matters to such lengths if he hadn't flaunted his own ample feeding in our faces. In those catch-as-catch-can days unpaid salaries, starvation rations, absconding managers, sheriffs' attachments on scenery, were as much part of the customary picture as pirating the scripts we played. There were certain spots which no troupe ever entered without making up its mind to bankruptcy—Kansas notably, which was known throughout the theatrical world as "the death circuit." In Kansas you agreed to play for the well-known coffee and cakes and were lucky if you got them three times a day. Plenty of times, no doubt, I could have abandoned the theater and got myself far better fed at some less glamorous employment. But my new dignity as a professional would not permit a return to newspaper-selling or peanut-butchering. I might have to resort to dodges to keep soul and body together, but at least the dodges would have to have some flavor of back-drops and paid admissions behind them.

After my initiation with Grismer's company, I had to join a Tom-show to earn a living. But that was nothing to be ashamed of. I think that, if pushed, every American actor above a certain age would confess to having served time in an "Uncle Tom's Cabin" troupe—that was a standard ingredient for a normal career,

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like Launching Day on the Bowery, when all boys who couldn't swim were thrown off the end of a dock to learn how. Besides, this was a Tom-show of parts. Far more parts than usual, since it carried a double cast as a gag—two Little Evas, two Uncle Toms, two Topsys and two Lawyer Markses, of whom I was one. I don't mean they were carried as understudies either—they played the roles simultaneously, crazy as it may sound. In the auction block-scene, for instance, when Uncle Tom is sold down the river, there was a Marks in each corner of the stage taking the lines alternately with the other. From the artistic point of view that may have been a mistaken inspiration, but as a piece of showmanship it always went like a house afire and was, in consequence, a device by no means uncommon among Tom-shows when times were hard. And times were good and hard or I wouldn't have been in the company in the first place.

As soon as I reported to the company, they said I'd have to rehearse with the dogs. The dogs these outfits carried for the Eliza-crossing-the-ice business were theoretically bloodhounds. In sober fact they were Great Danes or mastiffs, because real bloodhounds are extremely rare and even more expensive animals and don't look any tougher than so many superannuated house-cats. They're just smelling-machines with droopy ears and melancholy countenances and gentle dispositions. The audience, however, fully believed that the huge, tigerish, clip-eared and ravening creatures who

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pursued poor Eliza across the Ohio were the full-bred and priceless bloodhounds the advertising claimed they were.

They looked tough too. That was why I felt a trifle jumpy when the manager equipped me with a leather collar, to which was attached a highly realistic rubber sausage, led me into a dimly lighted cellar beneath the stage, and announced that he was going to sick the dogs on me. They were really gentle and good-natured, he added, and knew their parts beautifully, so I would come to no harm—then, before I could protest or ask for instructions, he was gone to turn the dogs loose. I had just got started looking for somewhere to hide when a hundred and odd pounds of Great Dane leaped on me out of the shadows, knocked me down—in those days I hardly weighed as much as an outsize dog—seized the rubber sausage in his teeth and began to bounce my head up and down on the floor with the purchase it gave him, all the while snarling and growling and carrying on like a fiend incarnate. But he didn't seem to be doing me any permanent damage. By the time the stage-manager called him off and I'd got dusted off, I had the idea. It felt like the end of the world till you got used to it, all right, but, from then on, the dog and I collaborated to thrilling effect. After going through it at least once and often twice a day, I don't know who made the more noise—the dog snarling and snorting as he was ostensibly tearing my throat out, or me hollering and screaming and panting and groaning and gur-

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gling. It was intended to be one of the high points of the show—and it certainly was.

That was middling arduous, but hardly a patch on another lean season when, for lack of anything that paid better, I played “horse” for a hypnotist. Hypnotism acts were pretty popular back then and I must say that, in this case at least, the stage rushed in ahead where science was as yet afraid to tread for another twenty or thirty years. And “horse” was the technical name for the actor whom a stage hypnotist or mesmerist or magician used to hire to sit in the audience and volunteer to come up on the stage to be made a monkey of. That doesn’t necessarily mean the hypnotist was a fake who needed a horse all the time. My boss, a former doctor whose professional name was Satanella, had the power all right. With luck he could find in the audience some chinless and staring individual who would hypnotize beautifully, with no fake about it, stretch out as stiff as a poker so he could be laid along the backs of two chairs with only his feet and neck supported. But he couldn’t always count on finding a good subject and the horse was an ace in the hole. If possible, the horse would also be a real hypnotic subject. If one couldn’t be hired, he would put up with somebody like me who, although he couldn’t be hypnotized by Sven-gali himself, was quite willing to fake it for fifteen dollars a week—when I got it, which was seldom enough. We were a good act while we lasted. I faked hypnotism to the queen’s taste. And Satanella, a slender, tall,



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dark young fellow with claw-like hands and sweeping, wavy black hair and languorous dark eyes and a low, insinuating voice was just exactly what the audience thought a hypnotist ought to look like.

Our audiences were always running over with hard guys from Missouri who had to be shown, so you had to give them their money's worth. It was easy to get droopy and stiff-jointed at the word of command under the boss's magic eye, grunt like a pig, lie down and roll over, swagger round with my head swinging like a grizzly bear's. I'd never seen a grizzly but Satanella said that was the way they acted. He spared me the chair stunt although many a fake has done it with a forked board strapped up his back and down the backs of his legs. But he did put me through the business of having needles run through my cheeks and lighted cigars ground into my flesh. For the needle stunt he gave me local anesthetics and used a kind of heat-insulation lotion to protect me from the cigars. Still it was always a little chancy and, when he started talking about using me as subject for his famous stunt of burying a hypnotized man six feet underground and digging him up good as new at the end of a week, I experienced sizable misgivings.

He explained there would be a pipe leading from the coffin to the surface so I wouldn't smother:

"But suppose it rains?" says I.

"We'll put a little tin umbrella over it," says he.

"I have no faith in little tin umbrellas," says I. "And

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besides, some playful skeptic might plug up the pipe to see what happened."

"We'd have it watched."

"Not with me at the other end," I said. "You go get buried and I'll watch the little tin umbrella."

He scowled, mumbled something and dropped the subject. But a few days later I began to suspect that he was remembering it against me. We were putting on our act—the usual round of grunting and rolling over was finished—and he started to give me the needles. When he deliberately overlooked the anesthetized zone and jabbed right through my cheek—well, between my mistrust of the look in his eye and the burning smart of it, I gave him a solid right-hander on the bridge of his chiseled ivory nose before I'd thought. The audience whooped with startled joy and then broke into thundering applause when Satanella, also losing his presence of mind, handed me a return compliment on the point of the jaw. We slugged away toe to toe for a while and then went to the floor in a good old-fashioned rough-house, no holds barred. Satanella was badly handicapped by his tight-fitting frock-coat, which helped make up for the difference in weight, so it was a fine shindy while it lasted. Members of the audience told me afterwards that, even if the act was spoiled, the fight was worth the whole price of admission.

Naturally that was the end of my playing horse. I walked the tracks back to San Francisco, definitely minus the two weeks' pay he owed me. But, when Sat-



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anella turned up in New York years afterwards and made himself quite a name by hypnotizing a famous actor and a famous dramatist in a demonstration for the press, I put him under contract and toured him all round with such success that I forgave him and I think he forgave me. He was still a master hypnotist but he was also still a master hand at getting results with or without hypnotism. He had a stunt then of taking a subject by the hand and being led blindfolded, without a spoken word of instruction, to find something hidden where only the subject knew of it. It never missed either—but I noticed Satanella always picked some fat and elderly gentleman for subject. That way, after he'd run the subject all over the hotel where the test would be made, up and down stairs, round and round the lobby, outside, inside, topside and belowside for half an hour, the victim would be so worn out that he'd lead Satanella to the place out of self-defense.

During another lean period, my ability at playing female roles spelled me over. I acted the part of Kathleen Mavourneen, the lady in the song, in a variety showing of the famous old optical illusion called "Pepper's Ghost." That was an arrangement of plate glass and mirrors which, when worked right, really did give an audience the impression of seeing visions floating in the air. It was rather a trick to put it over though, because the actors, down in a pit beneath the stage, had to go through their gestures lying on their sides against a surface slanted at an angle of forty-five degrees—some-

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thing like playing a role strapped on the side of a hip-roof. Anyway, you should have seen me in a short red skirt and buckled shoes, with a shawl over my head, talking falsetto and gesturing sidewise at my lost love—and all for \$10 a week.

Or perhaps the lowest I sank was playing with the melodrama company at the worst saloon-theater joint in Portland, Oregon. At that period Portland was just two streets on the Columbia River, pretty wide open and tough—nothing so wild as a place like Butte, of course, but even a relatively mild boom-town in the West those times was no place to hold a convention of Sunday School superintendents. I arrived in town as a member of a fairly respectable company touring with Irish plays. But business was so bad that, two days after we hit town, the manager jumped the show, taking the cash-box along after the immemorial custom of managers, and left his company as flat as a tenderfoot after one of the local gambling hells was finished with him. The company disintegrated in a high state of discouragement. My disintegration took place in the direction of the joint aforementioned, which was the only place where work was discoverable.

The scene of my labors will take describing, because I don't suppose a similar institution ever existed anywhere except on the Pacific Coast in its earlier days. The Old Bowery of blessed memory was the Metropolitan Opera in comparison. The theater consisted of an orchestra floor, patronized by people who weren't

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too drunk to have some idea of seeing a show, and a horseshoe of twenty-five or thirty boxes to which came citizens who were so drunk they didn't know whether they were seeing a show or a funeral in order to get drunker. Drinks were served everywhere in the house. Big drinks of bad liquor.

From eight to midnight, while the house filled up and the noise got going, the stage was occupied with a variety show—a show full of dancing girls, singing girls, purely ornamental and useless girls, which was the ancestor of the modern burlesque layout. At midnight the girls left the stage and came out front to “hustle drinks” in the boxes. They worked on commission—no salary—existing on a percentage of what they could persuade the customers to spend, and the methods of persuasion they used were just about what are still used in separating suckers from their bankrolls the world over. From midnight on the dramatic company took over the stage and played melodrama—“The Long Strike,” “The Boy Detective,” my old friend “Sweeney Todd, the Maniac Barber,” lots and lots of Indian plays—so long as business held up, which might well mean five o'clock in the morning. It didn't matter what we played, so long as it was noisy and full of action. We could have played “Oedipus Rex” on horseback and the house wouldn't have known the difference so long as the curtain stayed up to give the customers the idea they were getting some entertainment.

The curtain was lowered only when the rough-and-

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tumble fights which were always going on got too noisy and too extensive. At that point we'd ring down for a moment while the house-bouncers cleared out the antagonists, and then ring up again to carry on. Often enough the audience would decide to participate in the action of the play, although none of them had very much idea of what was going on. Once a drunk stole the show from the heroine, who was supposed to be rescuing the hero by leaping on the stage, untying the hero himself, and doing his spifflicated best to put out the fire that had been threatening his life—the fire being red paper with a light behind it and smoke puffed up through cracks in the stage floor. The performance was always being punctuated with uncued revolver shots as some founding father of Oregon whipped out his gun and loosed it off into the top of the proscenium arch with appropriate whoops and yells. And it was by no means uncommon for a patron, up to the chin in red-eye, to decide to bombard the villain for mistreating the heroine. Fortunately this impromptu defender of female innocence was usually too drunk to shoot very straight. Even so they'd come pretty close. I've often seen the villain ducking into the wings, very pale under his makeup, because a .45 bullet had cut a neat hole in a flat six inches above his head. Night after night it was pandemonium—the toughest audience to play to I ever met yet, and that is saying a great, great deal.

To make it all the worse for me as the comedian of the company, I had fallen head over heels in love with

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one of the girls in the variety show, one of the young women who had to hustle drinks while we were on stage. The screaming of women in the boxes was just as common a sound in our boiler-factory accompaniment as revolver shots—and every time I heard a scream, I had to start wondering if that was Mary—which wasn't her name, by the way. It was tough to have to go on gagging and working for laughs when what you really wanted to do was hurdle the footlights and do your 120-pound best to beat up some befuddled customer who'd grabbed your girl round the waist and was holding her on his knee by main force. We played our parts straight too, although why we bothered to I don't know yet. The fact is, I don't remember many of the details of that engagement very clearly—it was all too mad to make sense at the time or in retrospect either and, this being abysmally in love made sure that the fog never cleared away.

And she was a nice girl and I was dreadfully in love. I'd have stayed there all my life, playing melodrama till 5 A.M. every morning, just to be with her. She would have been worth it. Just how much she was worth came out very clearly at the end, cued by a telegram I got from Lewis Morrison—grandfather of Joan, Constance and Barbara Bennett, by the way—inviting me to come east and join a company he was getting together. Come at once. Shakespeare—backer with lots of money and a fool daughter who wanted to be an actress—opportunity not to be missed. Stage-manager and low-comedy



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parts at a good salary. My first impulse was to refuse it on the girl's account. But she wouldn't hear of that. She did whimper a little when the wire came, but then she got hold of herself and set herself to send me away. "You don't belong here, Billy," she said. "This is your chance to get going again, and you've got to grab it." It took days of heart-breaking argument, but I finally grabbed—and I never saw her again. She never answered my letters, having the courage to make the break clean if it had to be made. The only news I ever got of her was from a strolling actor who had heard somewhere at fourth or fifth hand that she had married a man who owned a gold mine. I hope it was true—anything to get her out of that Portland mad-house would have been all to the good.

In the bright lexicon of my youth, Portland had a way of meaning complications. I'd played the place before, in a company putting on a miniature imitation of the Kiralfy Brothers' production of "Michael Strogoff" that had been the sensation of San Francisco in 1882. They had had 200 actors, a huge ballet, horses, elephants, camels and a bear for the hero to fight. We dispensed with the camels, the elephants and all but one of the horses; our ballet consisted of four girls, and since there were only twelve members in our company, we had to spread the sixty speaking parts of the original over the most complicated doubling I had ever seen up to that moment. I was the Czar of Russia in the first scene, a telegraph operator in the second, a bearded

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Tartar chief in the third and the Grand Duke of Moscow in the last.

Something had to be done to make the thing spectacular enough to compare with the original in the eyes of Portland, so we decided to shoot the works on supernumeraries—we fixed it up with the Emmet Guards, Oregon's crack militia corps of Irish, to take the parts of the Russian, Tartar, Chinese and Siberian populace in the mass scenes. In rehearsal they took to acting like veteran troupers. We didn't have time for a dress rehearsal of the supers, but the costumes were ready for them at the opening night. I was putting on the royal robes of the Czar when they arrived—there was a trampling on the stage, a shout of "Halt! Order arms!" and then sounds indicating disagreement between the captain and some member of the company. I scampered on stage to see what went on and here were the Emmet Guards decked out in full regimentals—green uniforms, cockaded shakos, emerald epaulets. Handsome, but inappropriate.

"Good evening, captain," I said. "Let me congratulate you on the appearance of your men. Now tell them to go down in the supers' room and get into their costumes."

"Costumes?" he says. "What's wrong with the uniforms?"

I tried to explain that, although the uniform of the Emmet Guards was the finest bit of military tailoring the world had seen since the beginning of time, it would



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hardly do for the citizenry of Moscow to appear in it.

"And why not?" he says, ruffling up like a he turkey. "We'll go on as we are, me fine bucko, or we won't go on at all. D'ye hear?" Then he turned to his men: "Attention!" he says. "Shoulder arms!" and off they marched leaving the Czar of Russia bereft of subjects, rebels, enemies and soldiers all at once.

The house was packed and, if the performance was canceled, we were going to lose our only chance at making any money that season. I shed my royal robes and rushed out into the street. Portland streets were always full of loafers, and the loafers were extremely willing to make fifty cents as impromptu actors. In half an hour I'd collected sixty heterogeneous supers from bar-rooms and street corners and, while the audience waited—very patiently I must say—we rushed them through a vague rehearsal. They got the idea at once and made as good a mob as you could find right off the reel, putting the noses of the Emmet Guards completely out of joint. They weren't all sober, but that only added a dash of fire to their performance.

The house was expecting big things, but, when we brought on our solitary horse—Portland had never seen a horse on the stage before—they went wild. He was not a professional stage-horse, just a mild-mannered and elderly steed we'd hired from the livery-stable, and the burst of applause he got startled him considerably. As the roar continued he stopped dead in the middle of the stage, with the Captain of the Czar's guard, who

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was riding him, unable to do anything about it. And then, as horses always will at the wrong moment . . .

The ballet was to follow, but this had put it out of the question. There was pandemonium out front, the whole audience shrieking with laughter, and the devil to pay backstage. The manager handed the property-man a shovel and a broom and told him to go out and clean up. The property-man refused, saying something about how he hadn't been hired for a stable-boy. At which point the leading man turned to me and said: "Brady, why don't you do it?" Offhand I couldn't think of why not—so the Czar of Russia tucked up his sweeping ermine, settled his crown more firmly on his head, took the broom and shovel and marched out on the stage—in the confusion nobody had thought of ringing down the curtain—to clean up. Tumultuous applause. The show went on.

They make good stories afterwards, but that kind of business in one form or another was all in the day's work when you were trouping. A complicated life—particularly, if, like me, you were bent on sticking your oar into all departments of the business. Merely juggling the scenery was enough to have driven a green-horn mad. There was a whole science of standard scenery which you had to master. A respectable theater always owned a certain amount of stuff for the use of traveling companies—I can recite the list backwards yet. One "center-door fancy," one "side-door fancy," one "two-door fancy," one kitchen, one "palace arch,"

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“set waters” and “set rocks.” A street-scene drop, used for “scenes in one”—meaning a scene played just back of the footlights against a curtain while a set that took the full depth of the stage—in “three” or “four,” if you don’t mind this rush of technical language to the head—was being put together behind the curtain. That’s almost a forgotten language now, cropping up only occasionally in vaudeville, because the modern theater has abandoned numbered wings set in grooves in favor of cycloramas and box-sets. With that standard layout, plus an ocean drop, you could concoct sets for a month of repertory without repeating a bill once. A court scene meant a big chair on a platform against a flat with a palace arch on either side. With “set waters” and a batch of rattan, you could throw together a swell cane-brake for “The Octoroon.” And so forth and so on.

Out on the Coast, however, we played in anything—theaters with full equipment of scenery were relatively rare and we had to carry our own. A platform of wide boards on trestles in one end of a school-house, with candles or kerosene lamps set along the edge for footlights, was plenty good enough. Or, lacking a school-house, the local eating-house dining-room would serve. Our portable scenery was painted on canvas which would fold up to travel in trunks, then taken out and tacked up on walls or strung across the stage on ropes, like the week’s wash. And, if the scenery we found in a third-rate theater was so worn you couldn’t tell whether it represented a swamp or a desert, we tacked our own

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over the worn paint on the theater's flats. It was wonderful what you could pack away in a trunk. For "Under the Gaslight" we used to carry a whole demountable locomotive—cow-catcher, smokestack, boiler and all, folded up in the middle like a paper-doll.

In the process of playing everything from farce to "Hamlet," we paid very little attention to copyright and royalties. Back then nobody bothered with such details, except the flossiest theaters in the largest towns where performances were conspicuous and a check-up easy. The bootleg playbroker flourished in the land. As soon as a new success appeared, the broker's henchmen would go and take shorthand notes of the lines and business, print the results up in a hurry—these bootleg texts were incredibly mangled most of the time—and distribute copies to fly-by-night troupes all over the country for an average price of \$5 apiece. Sometimes they took the precaution of changing the title a bit—"The Two Orphans" would be bootlegged as "Two Little Children," say—but it wasn't really necessary. Things like "Hazel Kirke" and "The Silver King" and "Rose-dale" and "The White Slave" were played thousands of times without the author's getting a penny. If the author could hunt out an illicit performance in Tombstone or Ashtabula or Pierre, he could sue. But hunting them out was expensive and ten to one you couldn't collect from a barnstorming manager even if you got a verdict, so there was little point in resistance.

After a while, when things got too thick, managers

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with a new success would sow the house with bouncers whose job it was to throw out members of the audience who were seen taking notes. I remember one occasion, with "Way Down East" in Chicago, when I had a patrol-wagon backed up and waiting at the lobby-entrance to stow pirates in as fast as we spotted them. But there was no beating the system, so long as the barnstormers' demand for illegitimate scripts kept up. The pirates could always bribe the prompter to copy them off a version, complete with scene-, prop- and light-plots, to be broadcast throughout the land. Even when a new hit wasn't directly bootlegged, the professional plagiarists would steal the feature idea of the play and run it into the ground with flagrant imitations. The first appearance of a fire-engine on the stage in "The Still Alarm," the candles round the corpse in "La Tosca," the moving-platform and buzz-saw business in "Blue Jeans," the big tank in "The Dark Secret," into which the villain threw the heroine—real water and a highly realistic splash—were immediately snapped up and played all the way across the board. This bootlegging went out when the movies began to replace the old barnstorming troupes, but there are vestiges of it left even now. Tent and boat-shows are still known to produce Broadway successes without the author's knowledge, merely altering the title, the names of the characters and a line or two.

A large collection of these mutilated scripts of the most famous plays of the period was quite an asset way



back when. I made a business of keeping a supply on hand and was known in consequence as "Manuscript Bill." I still have a number of these ratty old scripts, some in print, some copied off secretly in longhand, and I still find it occasionally useful to have been "Manuscript Bill." Just last year a big radio-hour, wanting to put on a compressed version of "Monte Cristo," came to me after they'd looked everywhere else for a good acting version—and sure enough, down in the middle of the heap was a longhand copy of "Monte Cristo" just as Charles Fechter had played it. They offered me \$50 for the use of it. Not on your life, I said—but I'll take a thousand and play Edmond Dantes for you myself. So I did and I must confess that, as I was getting off those grand old lines, I sounded so much like James O'Neill I startled myself. Nobody else in the studio had ever heard O'Neill do it, so I could keep my illusions undisturbed.

My break into managing on my own had a good deal to do with the old-time tradition of piracy and plagiarism. During that tour with Morrison's company, when I went east with a broken heart, leaving Portland and my girl behind me, I saved the life of the company by persuading Morrison to put on a version of "Faust," after Shakespeare failed him, building a set for the big Brocken scene that was an exact imitation of the set Henry Irving had used in London. All I had to go by was a picture of the scene and a pirated version of "Faust," but it was enough. Morrison shook the theater





CULVER

MAUDE ADAMS

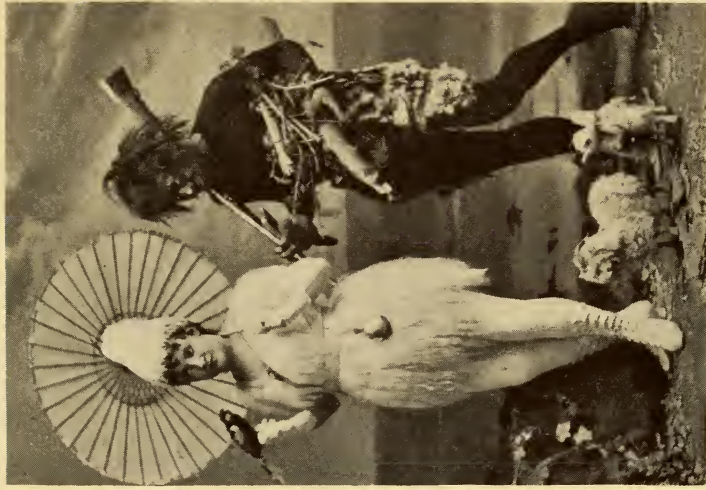
as the Child in "The Celebrated Case"

1878



YOUSOUF  
The  
Terrible  
Turk

© THE RING PHOTO



CULVER

LYDIA THOMPSON

in "Robinson Crusoe"



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with Mephistopheles' thundering lines and Hobart Bosworth, the same one who was famous afterwards in the movies, was the symbolic figure of Man who struggled up the mountain with little devils poking him with pitchforks and holding him back. When Man finally reached the top and Mephistopheles, with a demoniacal laugh, kicked him in the solar plexus and sent him rolling all the way to the bottom again, it was something to see in the glare of the red fire. The better that got across, the prouder I felt. In no time I was insisting that Morrison print "Production supervised by William A. Brady" in the billing, and, when he refused, I felt very badly treated. So, to impress my importance on him, I resorted to some stage managing on my own. I hired a lot of gallery gods to attend one night—four bits apiece for admission was all that cost me—and see I was done right by when the curtain fell on the Brocken scene.

The house rang with applause as the curtain lowered and raised again for Morrison's first bow. But sticking out of the applause like a sore thumb was a chorus of shouts from the gallery: "Brady! Brady! We want Brady!" The longer the curtain went up and down on Morrison and the other actors, the louder the shouts grew. The house, figuring that Morrison was trying to hog the credit for something somebody else had done, took up the cry. And then, when it reached its height, I strutted on stage to be met by the finest ovation anybody ever got for a total investment of \$25. It was just as well I got my money's worth that way, for Morrison

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smelled a rat and, instead of being impressed by the popular demand for me, he fired me that night. He also went on to play "Faust" for twenty years and make piles of money out of it.

My next venture into piracy is a long story that had better be worked into gradually. It began when Edwin Booth, at the peak of his fame, came to San Francisco to put on a magnificent repertory for the town where he got his start. Thousands of cheering citizens greeted him at the railroad station and lined the streets to see him drive past on the way to the hotel. Similarly, when they issued a call for bit actors to lead mobs and fight in battle scenes and roar as Roman citizens in Booth's plays, the theater was jammed with professionals panting for a chance to say they had acted with Booth. I was on hand early and landed a berth at \$22 a week. All of us would have played for nothing and been glad of the privilege.

Then one night a rearrangement of the cast of "Hamlet" left the role of second grave-digger unfilled and I volunteered—I never lacked for nerve. Besides I'd played that part in every mining-camp from Seattle to Los Angeles. Booth wasn't very confident about me, I'm afraid, but he finally said well, do whatever I was accustomed to doing and he'd play along. He was the gentlest and most considerate star I ever saw—his corrections and suggestions were made with courtesy and point—none of these bullyragging, temperamental outbursts the smaller fry were so fond of. And, when the cur-

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tain fell on the grave-scene that night and I was climbing out of the grave, all strung up with the tension of acting with the great Booth, he patted me on the shoulder and said: "Why, you did very well, my lad." I felt prouder of myself at that moment than I ever have before or since.

But this triumph did not blunt the business-sense I had developed as a peanut-butcher. With San Francisco gone clean crazy over the return of its home-grown genius, the box-office was always in a state of siege. I knew the treasurer of the theater and arranged with him and another fellow to go into the scalping business in a foolproof way. People standing in line for hours listened eagerly when you offered to get them tickets without waiting longer—at a nominal advance of fifty cents a ticket. We collected their money, then went to the box-office back-door and completed the deal. At the end of the month we had cleared \$2000 on an investment of nothing flat. My half was the first thousand dollars I've ever owned.

Between that and having been praised by Edwin Booth I worked up the nerve to persuade Walter Morosco, father of Oliver Morosco of "Peg O' My Heart" fame, to engage me as guest-star at his theater—a monster dance-hall in San Francisco, seating 2500, where he had a company of efficient scenery-chewers presenting standard thrillers at popular prices. I was to get 10% of the proceeds on condition that I furnished a play a week at no risk or cost to him. With



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my trunkful of pirated manuscripts, that was easy. For the thirteenth week, with the supply in the trunk running low, I bought a copy of Dion Boucicault's famous old melodrama, "After Dark," for fifteen cents, and presented that.

It went fine too. But, since it was the thirteenth week, in the middle of our prosperity who should appear in San Francisco but Dion Boucicault himself. I received a curt note saying Mr. Boucicault would like to see me at his hotel. I was fairly certain that I didn't want to see him, but there was no point in ducking. He turned out to be a white-haired old gentleman with a stately air, a delightful brogue and every symptom of being extremely annoyed with me.

"Well, young man," he said, "I hear you're doing very well with my play."

"Yes, sir," I said.

"What's more," he said, "I hear you've been tampering with it—introducing vulgar details like a tank of water with swans and boats and a raid on a gambling house."

"Yes, sir," I said. I could have also said that the swans and the boats were going over great too.

"Well, what about my royalties? Do you know I could put you in jail for pirating that play?"

I said I'd bought a printed copy of the play and thought that gave me the right to produce. And besides I didn't see where jail came in at the worst.

"Think again," he said. "Your legal education has



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been neglected, Mr. Brady. Your printed copy is an unauthorized publication. I have never authorized publication of 'After Dark.' Nor have I ever copyrighted it."

I said in that case I didn't see what was to keep me from producing it.

"I repeat," he said, "that your legal education has been neglected. If I had copyrighted it, it would only be a question of a civil suit for royalties. But, since I have not, it is the author's personal property—and whoever owns a copy has committed a criminal offense. That is common law, which we have always with us like the poor. Do I make myself clear?"

I said he made himself very clear. This criminal business was news to me—as a matter of fact, very few people are yet aware that common law enters into the author's protection on uncopyrighted stuff—but Boucicault, the old fox, never copyrighted anything just so he'd have jail to club people with when he wanted to. It was painfully evident that I was out on a limb for fair.

I just stood and stared at him. Then, judging he had me in the right frame of mind:

"How'd you like to buy me play?" he asked. "Can ye raise \$1500?"

I gulped and thought fast. The piece was playing to standing room and I figured it would have a thundering future value. Evidently he was short of cash and willing to sacrifice something to raise money.

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"Well," I said, "I might scrape up a thousand."

"Eleven hundred," he said quickly, his eyes narrowing and avoiding mine. Twenty years later I'd have been suspicious about his haste, but twenty years earlier I bit.

"Done," I said, and reached into my pocket where the money from the Booth business was.

"After Dark" was mine. Or at least I thought it was. It took me a year to find out that it was the worst pup I was ever sold in the course of a highly checkered career. Presently I found myself taking "After Dark" into New York—and we had no sooner opened there than minions of the law slapped an injunction on me—none other than the great Augustin Daly was enjoining me from presenting "After Dark" and the courts were back of him. I started asking questions fast, the questions I should have asked Boucicault. And then it all came out. Years before Daly had sued Boucicault for plagiarizing the big scene of "After Dark" from Daly's "Under the Gaslight"—the scene where the hero is barely rescued from an onrushing locomotive. Boucicault knew he had lost that suit as well as he knew the words of "The Wearing of the Green"—and he wrote that song himself. The long and short of it was that, being short of cash, he'd sold me something he didn't own.

Naturally I started fighting. Having been an under-sized kid on the Bowery had taught me that only by fighting early and often could you keep from being unnecessarily picked on. It is equally true in the amuse-

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ment world that, whoever wins in the end, it's a good idea to impress it on your professional confrères that picking on you means a fight to the finish. Compared with the great Mr. Daly, with his low, impressive voice and aristocratic bearing, I was an upstart pigmy, a barnstorming sharpshooter trying to crash New York with a pirated manuscript. But it took thirteen years and thousands of dollars to finish that fight. Twice we took it to the United States Supreme Court and twice the court slapped us down, deciding that the locomotive and a character tied to the track being rescued in the nick of time in "After Dark" was a "colorable imitation" of the business in "Under the Gaslight." The whole thing stood or fell by that two-minute scene. We combed the dramatic literature of Europe and America to find a play which had something like that before 1866, when "Under the Gaslight" was written. Daly was an old hand at lifting things himself, so it was by no means unlikely that there was some such original to break his case with. But it didn't turn up. In the end Daly got a judgment for \$61,000. But the statute of limitations spared me from having to pay more than \$6,000. Licked though I was, I'd made an important contribution to the development of the copyright law. That case is still one of the standard precedents, always quoted and referred to. And every time I hear of it, I get mad all over again.

By a queer trick of law, however, I am now owner of "After Dark," free of impediments. That goes back

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to Boucicault's cooniness in neglecting to copyright it. Daly's copyright on "Under the Gaslight" ran out years ago, but common law rights in "After Dark" will never run out, and I own them lock, stock and barrel. For a long time I considered that merely a bit of poetic justice, success arriving ironically after all usefulness had gone out of Boucicault's old play. A few years ago when Christopher Morley and the boys wanted to stage a parodied production of "After Dark" in Hoboken, I merely took a small check from them as acknowledgment of my rights and let it go at that. I figured the thing would run a week or so as a freak stunt and then fold quietly up. But the old war-horse up and played a solid year to pretty good business. When it came to the question of putting out road companies, I wasn't going to be caught napping again. I fixed up a respectable royalty arrangement this time, and those road companies brought my bread on the waters romping home to the tune of something in five figures. I don't recommend buying up uncopyrighted plays as a way of providing for your declining years, but I do wish Dion Boucicault could have seen the figures on the checks that came in forty years after he had looked me over hesitantly and inquired if I thought I could raise \$1500.

In my early days, however, script juggling was always getting me into trouble. Shortly after the Boucicault deal, when I was already manager of a troupe of my own touring up and down the Pacific Coast, I read Rider Haggard's "She," the literary sensation of the

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year, and began to wonder if there wasn't a play in it. Its central theme of the incredibly beautiful queen who was eternally young—you remember she kept that way by bathing in an everlasting flame—was thoroughly well suited to the type of sensational staging in which I had been so arduously trained. So, when there was nothing else to do one Sunday morning in Reno, I got a copy of "She," a ream of paper, a pair of shears and a paste-pot—I think I also used a pencil to number my pages—and emerged five hours later with a dramatic version of the novel that looked to me very much like business.

We put it on in Los Angeles with the everlasting flame shooting out of the end of a gas-pipe behind an asbestos screen—a small girl named Maude Adams danced in the ballet. In San Francisco the audience ate it up until, in the final scene, the everlasting flame works too well and the lovely lady is changed into a puling infant. That was Rider Haggard's idea, not mine. It worked fine in the book, but, on the stage, it set the audience into irreverent fits of laughter. Still the critics gave it rave reviews—it occurs to me that they may have left before the end—and the prestige of the book brought the public in flocks. We had a hit on our hands. And that meant just one thing to the coast manager—book it east and end up in New York.

So we started east, as proud as a mother cat with new kittens. We'd got as far as Dakota, with business going great guns, when we learned that there was trouble



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ahead. Charles Frohman, already a prominent New York manager, was sending his production of "She," starring William Gillette, west on tour. It was a tremendous thing—hundreds of people—trains of scenery—our little half-pint production would look like thirty cents in comparison. We were going east—they were coming west. Our paths would cross at St. Paul, where we played the week before they did. St. Paul would be the battleground, and that is no idle figure of speech.

Presently we heard from our advance man that Frohman's man was already in St. Paul preparing to "slough" us—that is, bury us under an avalanche of advertising or belittle us until the public would think we weren't worth seeing. I installed my understudy in my place in the cast and did a Sheridan's Ride to St. Paul. As soon as the train had stopped, I started inquiring for Frohman's man—fellow named McGeachey. They said he was up in the composing room of one of the newspapers. I chased up there, fifteen flights of stairs, and found him laying out an advertisement for next day's paper—very interesting reading for me it was. "Pay no attention," it said, "to the small barnstorming Brady company composed of only eight members—" it was really ——"and reinforced by supers collected along the byways and hedges—" we got our supers exactly the same way Frohman did—"Brady is a cheat and a faker and has no right to produce the play, as the sole right has been conveyed to Mr. Frohman by Mr. Haggard." As a matter of legal fact, Haggard had never



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taken out copyright in the United States, so he had no legal rights to convey to anybody. But that didn't rile me as much as the description of myself—and that didn't get under my skin as much as the description of my company, which was the apple of my eye. I dropped the copy and strutted up to McGeachey like a bantam rooster:

"Are you McGeachey?" I asked.

"Yes," he said. "What about it?"

I told him what about it in some five minutes of the purest Anglo-Saxon which the Bowery and the old West had taught a willing pupil, ending: "—and I'm going to punch you on the snoot right here and now."

He took me at my word and started running. I followed him to the head of the stairs and then leaned on the rail and listened to his feet pounding frantically down the whole fifteen flights as fast as he could hit the treads. To judge by the noise, I think he fell down the eleventh or twelfth flight. But that didn't keep the advertisement out of the newspaper. The next morning I got a copy and took it to the best lawyer in town and laid it on his desk.

"What," I asked, "can I do to the man that wrote that?"

He looked it over judicially.

"I should call that criminal libel," he said.

"What can I do to him?" I repeated.

"Well," he said, rubbing his chin, "for \$500 I'll get him arrested. For \$1500 I'll have him indicted."

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I opened the old black valise which hung from my shoulder and always carried the company funds, and counted out \$1500 in certificates of deposit on New York.

"Go to it," I said.

That evening the law snatched McGeachey out of bed—to judge from the way he was traveling when I last saw him, he was probably under it, though, instead of in it—and put him in the local calaboose. It took \$10,000 of Frohman's money to get him out too. But there was a kickback. Next morning practically every newspaper in America came out with headlines—the first national publicity I ever got: "HIGH-BINDER FROM WEST PUTS FROHMAN'S AGENT IN JAIL" they said. That sunk our production of "She." That and the fact that our route from there on covered the same towns Frohman's production had already played. We went into New York with "After Dark" instead—and I've already told you what happened to "After Dark" on Broadway. One tour east had already got me embroiled with both Augustin Daly and Charles Frohman, which was pretty good for a beginner.

Otherwise it was discouraging. Three times I'd had my hand on a good thing and seen it get away from me—"Faust" first, then "She," then "After Dark." I figured it was about time I got something good and hung on to it a while. And in due time I found it. Its name was James J. Corbett.



## *Chapter III*

YOU HEAR ON ALL SIDES THESE DAYS THAT THE BIG GATE at the Louis-Schmeling fight was a sign the depression is over. I wouldn't know about that. I've seen too many depressions, both Class A and Class B, to get brash about them. But I do know that so huge a sum being paid in at the turnstiles for any boxing-match would have been impossible without the contributions of two figures of my generation. One was the Marquis of Queensberry, father of the revised code of rules, which took the undue brutality out of boxing. The other was "Gentleman Jim" Corbett, the pugilist who first sold boxing to the general public.

I had nothing to do with the drawing up of the Queensberry rules, which are still the backbone of modern boxing. But I was Jim Corbett's manager before and during his greatest glory, so I know something about how he brought boxing out of the alley and into the royal suite. Fighters had been plenty popular before he arrived. Nobody was ever idolized the way the sporting public, particularly the Irish, idolized John L. Sullivan. But Corbett's handsome face, his wit, urban-

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ity and good taste, as well as his lithe grace in the ring, appealed to a public for whom boxing was formerly associated with low dives. You could see the change beginning when a woman smuggled herself into the Corbett-Sullivan fight in man's clothes. When women began wanting to attend boxing-matches, when the heavyweight champion could sit down on equal terms with any financier or senator in the land, the various state laws which prohibited boxing along with drug-peddling and horse-stealing could be repealed—and at that point million-dollar gates were just round the corner. Corbett, the new kind of fighter, came along just in time to finish the clean-up job which the Queensberry rules began.

Jim and I were old acquaintances long before he got famous. When we first met, he had no thought of turning pugilist and my dreams of getting into the theater were still as hazy as a San Francisco fog. Back then he was a clerk in San Francisco's Nevada Bank, the bank built on the capital that Mackay, Flood and O'Brien had dug out of the Comstock Lode, going in with shovels and coming out with millions. And I was the cocky, dandy peanut-butcher on a fast train from San Francisco to Santa Cruz—the local Coney Island—cleaning up eighty or a hundred a week and courting a girl at the other end of the route. Her sister was almost as pretty as she was. And "Pompadour Jim" Corbett, the young bank-teller who was already king of local amateur boxing, was courting the sister. Even when he was

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a youngster, few women could resist the temptation to turn round and take another look at his long, straight back and the easy swing of his shoulders—and, if Corbett had picked my girl, I'd have been out of luck. But as it was we got along fine and every week-end, when he ran down to Santa Cruz on the train, I chatted with him in the time I could spare from business.

He thought of his boxing at the Olympic Club, the finest athletic outfit in the city, as recreation—the kind of recreation that a brisk young husky would naturally take to. No up from the gutter in his case—his father was reasonably well off, being the best-thought-of undertaker in the respectable Irish community of Hays Valley. If Jim had stayed in banking, he'd have made his mark. He was the smart, clean, likable, able kind who go a long way in whatever they do. But the combination of his natural aptitudes, the finest physique the Almighty ever put together, solid courage and the expert teaching of Walter Watson, the Olympic Club instructor, edged him nearer and nearer the professional ring.

While I was barnstorming all over the country, Corbett's fighting fame was filling San Francisco and beginning to leak over into the sporting world at large. It made talk when, in an exhibition, he outpointed Jack Burke, the English middleweight champion. There was more talk about his three fights with Joe Choynski, the other great local heavyweight. Twice Corbett won—the third set-to was broken up by the



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police. He told me once that his last fight with Choynski, thirty-odd rounds with only riding-gloves—wickedder than bare fists, some ways—was the worst he'd ever been through. So naturally, when the great John L. came to San Francisco, they tried to get him to meet Corbett, who had turned pro in the meantime by becoming the Olympic instructor.

Sullivan would consent only to a three-round exhibition in full evening dress—it was a charity benefit, attended by the finest people in town, men and women, like a Metropolitan opening; Corbett was already drawing the ladies. They sparred politely to genteel applause, but those three short rounds probably had a great deal to do with Corbett's becoming champion just the same. Sullivan was the king of pugilism, a legendary man-killer—and yet, Corbett found, he could hit him at will and stay away from him at will. The way Sullivan would bite at a feint was something Corbett recalled with magnificent effect in New Orleans several years later. All Sullivan or any of the old-timers knew was a straight left and a right-handed haymaker. Corbett was pioneering with fast footwork, hooks and uppercuts. I've seen them all since Sullivan, big and little, and Jim Corbett was the finest sparrer of them all. He revolutionized boxing, not only as a spectacle, but as a science as well.

Then Choynski's friends, smarting under their man's defeat, imported Peter Jackson, the great Australian negro, on whom Sullivan himself had drawn



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the color-line, to whip Corbett. It was a good idea that didn't work. After thirty rounds of wicked fighting, neither man would take more chances—and for thirty rounds more, until the referee was forced to call it no contest, they waltzed round one another, Corbett saying to Jackson: "Come on, you—you're the famous fighter—come on in and finish me up." Any recent amateur who could stay sixty rounds with Peter Jackson had arrived. Overnight the papers all over the country were blazing with Corbett's name—and that was where I stepped into the picture with both feet.

I was in New York, fighting Augustin Daly's injunction against my playing "After Dark." Pending appeal on the case, I could go on with the play in a Bowery theater, not a block and a half from the spot where my father had dropped dead in the street. Business was pretty good, but I wanted standing-room only—and these sudden headlines in the papers gave me ideas. The ink on the headlines was hardly dry when I was telegraphing Jim to come east and do a sparring exhibition for me in "After Dark" for \$150 a week. Primrose and West, the minstrel kings, far bigger frogs in the theatrical puddle than I was, had the same idea at the same time. But memories of summer evenings and nice girls in Santa Cruz must have won—I got the call. And from then on the team of Brady and Corbett was never headed while it stayed together.

The movies didn't invent the idea of exploiting fighters as actors. That was already a well-known gag

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in my day, with much more excuse. There was no boxing outside private clubs or bootlegged bouts on barges, with the sheriff's posse likely to appear any minute. The ordinary citizen had no chance to see boxing at all and, by the same token, side-bets were the only way the boxers could make any money out of straight fighting. So the average man's urge to see the fighters in action and the fighters' financial needs were taken care of—more or less—by exhibition-tours or by theatrical tours, with the boxers starred in specially constructed plays.

Sullivan went over in a big way in a play called "Honest Hearts and Willing Hands"—the title should give you a rough idea of what it was like. Peter Jackson, who, black or not, was as fine and intelligent a man as ever walked, played Uncle Tom as well as I've ever seen it played in my life. Bob Fitzsimmons, the blacksmith from down under, was exploited winning the championship in "The Honest Blacksmith." The play included a real forge on the stage and Fitzsimmons would delight the audience by making real horse-shoes before their eyes—and, if he liked you, he'd make one specially for you with his name written in the red-hot iron. Acting ability didn't cut much ice in these cases. Plenty of people were going to pay money to see the great John L. whether or not he could act a lick. But that made it all the neater for somebody like Corbett who could act and fight both.

It was that combination, in fact, which made the pair

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of us such a natural. I wanted a heavyweight champion for a theatrical attraction. If, in order to get one, I had to take a rising youngster and make a champion of him, well and good. You only had to see Corbett walk on a stage to see that he was a natural actor. He'd already made a big hit as an amateur in S. F. playing Armand Duval in "Camille," and it was no surprise to me when, on his first real stage appearance—singing "Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay," in a very pleasant baritone, as cool as any old-timer born in a prop-box—he showed he could have got over without his pugilistic prestige to excite curiosity. There was no more need for apologizing for him on the stage than for apologizing for his after-dinner speeches. In both jobs he was as smooth and self-possessed and at home as he was in the ring. So it made a great deal of sense that, as soon as he was well started as the crucial attraction of "After Dark," I should start a man writing a play for him at the same time I was starting after a fight with John L. Sullivan. I know it sounds all twisted, but the plain fact was that, from my point of view, the Sullivan fight and winning the championship was just a publicity stunt for Corbett's forthcoming play. That's probably the world's record for queer reasons for becoming a fight-manager.

At the time, confessing my motives would have sounded particularly loony, since the idea of toppling Sullivan off his throne was inconceivable to anybody in his senses. John L. was a combination of Jack Dempsey and Babe Ruth with a dash of Paul Bunyan thrown

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in—so far as the public was concerned, anyway. But Sullivan hadn't fought for six years; he was, I hoped, more and more coasting on his reputation—and, most important of all, I was convinced I had the new era in boxing right in my hand in the person of Corbett, who was to Sullivan what the first rifle was to a smooth-bore musket. So, starting the build-up while the play was readying, we started after Sullivan.

We weren't the only ones, either. Everybody was barking on John L.'s trail, all the sporting editors and the whole pack of fighters. Charley Mitchell, the Englishman, and a whole pack of formidable Australians—Frank Slavin, Jim Hall, Bob Fitzsimmons, Peter Jackson—were challenging, insulting, badgering, riding the Boston Strong Boy in an effort to get him into the ring. Champions are generally ring-shy, and I don't blame them. When a champion climbs through the ropes, he's putting his whole professional capital on one throw of the dice. One bad break wipes him out for good—and nobody ever loved being champion like the great John L.

He stood it as long as he could. Then he turned at bay and roared back, issuing a long royal proclamation which mentioned each of his tormentors by name with personal compliments attached, referred to James J. Corbett as "that bombastic bluffer," and announced that the first man who would put up a \$10,000 forfeit, \$2500 down and the balance in six months, could have his teeth knocked down his throat by John L. Sullivan any

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time he liked. Within ten minutes of reading that, I had counted up all my available assets and discovered that they totaled just a little more than \$2500.

"Jim," I said, "here's our chance—we're off." At nine o'clock the next morning, while the other fellows were still thinking about it, I was down at the office of the stakeholder—Joe Eakins, it was, sporting editor of the old New York *World*—with \$2500 in nice new bills. I wasn't even worried about raising the balance. With Corbett's personality and the Sullivan challenge as capital, that was a "cert."

We took the obvious method—a barnstorming pugilistic tour. Fighters still make these tours and they're still the shadiest end of the fight-game. In big places, where the sporting editors were hep to a good deal, we gave straight exhibitions between Corbett and a sparring partner—and well worth seeing, too. But in smaller places, where boxing was practically extinct and nobody knew anything much, we pulled the old gag of "will meet all comers," offering \$100 to any local boy who could stay with Corbett for three or four rounds—three if possible. They tell me that the only funny business Sullivan ever pulled on these tours was giving a local pug \$25 to appear and take a dive—meaning let himself be knocked out—when nobody would dare climb into the ring with the champion. Playing it on the level as far as possible would have been Sullivan's way all right. But my man was no such undam-  
ageable ox as Sullivan and, although Corbett could hit



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plenty hard, quick killings weren't his style. I'd seen most of Sullivan's "meet-all-comers" bouts at Madison Square Garden in New York—and among other things I'd seen what happened when Charley Mitchell, who was supposed to be taking a dive, forgot what he was paid for and made a real fight of it. If Corbett cracked up his hands on some concrete-jawed blacksmith in St. Joe, or too many people succeeded in staying three rounds with him, the whole scheme was gone to pot. So I arranged matters to prevent accidents.

We laid hands on a well-known "mixed-ale fighter" named Connie MacVeagh—a mixed-ale fighter being a run-of-mine pugilist, supposed to train on mixed ale, who was willing to pick up some money any old way. MacVeagh looked like several million dollars in the ring and had a good head on him—just what we needed to stooge for Corbett. He was another boxer who could act. His performance of giving and taking tremendous punishment, only to be dropped by a punishing right hook just before the end of the third round, was a triumph of the histrionic art. He had a trick of getting his right glove between his jaw and Corbett's fist that made the finishing punch sound like a pile-driver coming home on a concrete hitching-block—and also made sure Corbett's hand would be uninjured.

But what made him invaluable was his genius at the diplomatic end of the game—which consisted in traveling well ahead of us, arriving in a promising spot and writing to the papers as a boxer just come to town and



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inquiring when Corbett would arrive, because he wanted a crack at that \$100. By the time we got there, MacVeagh would be firmly established as the idol of the local sporting element, and business would be grand. Our first town, for instance, was Hartford. And, when we got off the train, what should we see but MacVeagh, known locally as Knockout Miller—the first time, I think, that “Knockout” was ever used as part of a fighter’s *nom de guerre*—riding down the main street with the mayor and receiving the plaudits of an admiring crowd. He never missed. He wasn’t always Knockout Miller, of course—we gave him as many aliases as a confidence man. We met him in Washington State as the Walla Walla Giant, in El Paso as the Texas Terror, and any number of places under the chaste appellation of The Man-Killer, which always got over great anywhere which didn’t offer other inspiration.

Still, it took even him two or three weeks to worm his way into a plausible position in a new town, and, to make our stake, we had to show two or three times a week. You couldn’t make enough out of straight exhibitions in small towns, so we had to take an uncomfortable number of flyers into meeting local contenders, with all the risks that implied. Sometimes they’d take \$25 to behave prettily, other times they’d be in dead earnest. But we usually took care of that by a technique of working on the challenger’s nerves until Corbett had only to get into the ring with him, fool round a while, pull his man off balance with a feint

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—how that man could feint!—and put him away with one punch.

His straight man in that department was his sparing-partner, another mixed-ale fighter named Jim Daly. Daly lived fighting so thoroughly that, whatever he started to do, whether shake hands or say it was a nice day or order a drink, he always led off with a boxing attitude as naturally as a Nazi says "Heil Hitler." Daly, Corbett and the local boy would all be in the dressing-room together before the fight and Daly's and Corbett's conversation would run something like this:

"Say, Jim," Daly would say, "ever get any more word about the fellow in Chillicothe?"

"Oh, he's all right," Corbett would say, getting out of his pants. "He'll live, anyhow. I was talking to Bill about sending something to his family."

"They finally brought him to, did they?"

"After a while," Corbett would reply. "The doctor wrote Bill about it. He was out for a day and a half and I guess his jaw's gone for good, but I feel better now I know I didn't kill him."

"Gosh, Jim," Daly would answer, "you just donno your own strength. You better be careful with this one."

They staged it well—and there was a lot more. I rehearsed them letter-perfect and natural as an old shoe. And, after ten minutes or so of such softening up, you'd fairly have to carry the local boy into the ring.

Not that we always got away with that. There used

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to be a story, which I still insist is mostly legend, about the way we disposed of a tough baby named Monahan who wouldn't scare and wouldn't be knocked out either. That was at the old Lyceum Theater in Philadelphia, near the start of the tour. Monahan was a husky pug made of sole-leather and cast-iron who specialized on champions taking "meet-all-comers" tours and had quite a local reputation as the fellow who'd taken \$100 away from Sullivan and a lot of others by staying the stipulated three rounds. We'd planned on giving the usual exhibitions between Corbett and Daly, but the local papers were proud of their durable champion-baiter and began demanding to see what Corbett could do against him. When Monahan started hanging round the stage-door and shouting challenges to Corbett, we gave in and arranged the bout.

In the dressing-room Corbett and Daly gave him the works, but he just grunted—he seemed to have heard something like that before. And, in the ring, he was just as tough as they said he was. No matter how Corbett pasted him around, with my heart in my mouth at every blow on account of his hands, Monahan kept boring in for more, swinging and suffering, and if one of those punches landed, there'd be damage done. I was referee, and, in spite of the prospect of losing a hundred bucks, I made those some of the shortest rounds ever boxed. The final round was just the same as before—Monahan was no boxer, but he could take punishment like a butcher's block. So, as the story says,

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we took extreme measures. Daly got behind the back-drop with a carpenter's maul and, when Corbett backed Monahan up against the drop, Daly let him have it in the place where his head was just as Corbett connected with his jaw again. It might very well have been a good idea, too.

Then there was the Apache chief in Tucson. We weren't keen on fighting the noble red man, but he was the only opposition available. The house was half-red, half-white and tough as a half-breed always is—a perfect setting for trouble. The trouble started when the Indian, finding he was in for a shellacking, pulled a knife on Corbett in the middle of the ring. It went on to develop into one of the prettiest race-riots which had been seen since the battle of Wounded Knee, spreading over the theater and the stage too. Our habit of looking over the theater beforehand and picking hidden windows and side-doors was the only thing that saved the day.

The usefulness of a quick exit was even more forcibly borne in upon us in San Bernardino a couple of weeks later. That story really begins in my peanut-butcherer days, on a run through Arizona into California. That was back when the three Earp brothers were the quick-shooting terrors of Arizona. You may have heard of Wyatt Earp—well, his brother Virgil was just as tough an hombre. My train pulled into Tombstone one day at just the moment when the Earps, having shot up the town in their characteristic manner,

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were making a getaway. Morgan, the third Earp brother had been killed, but Wyatt and Virgil boarded our train in the nick of time. We'd heard shooting, and these two uncommunicative new passengers had got on in something of a hurry, but shots and quick departures were nothing out of the way in Tombstone, so none of us paid much attention.

The authorities in Tombstone telegraphed ahead to Tucson to meet our train and lay the Earps by the heels. As we neared the Tucson station, we could see that the premises were black with people, but we weren't sure what the crowd was for until we saw the Earps start doing things about their situation. Wyatt went up ahead, gun in hand, climbed into the tender and ordered the engineer to go right on—Tucson was off the schedule by order of the Earp brothers. Virgil hung out of a car-door, also gun in hand, and bombarded the platform as we went by to make sure that nobody tried to get aboard to make an arrest. And they wouldn't let the train stop till it had crossed the California line. That way I got a good look at Virgil Earp, and a good thing I did, too.

When Corbett and I hit San Bernardino years later, the whole town started insisting we should meet a local negro boxer who had once collected \$100 from Sullivan for lasting four rounds—one of the several instances that show John L. didn't always draw the color-line. That didn't suit our book at all. We were near the end of our tour, everything had gone fine, and there was



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no point in risking Corbett's hands and reputation with another Monahan in a place that small. So we just put on our regular sparring exhibition to pretty poor business and called it a day. But we were waited on by a committee of citizens guaranteeing a \$300 house if Corbett would take on the negro. We still said no—but, for that \$300, we'd let Daly stand up with him, if they were so anxious to see him fight. Agreed—we went to reopen the theater and the citizenry started collecting their \$300.

I posted myself at the door to discourage deadheads while Daly, Corbett and the negro went to the dressing-rooms. As usual, Daly and Corbett tried to work on his nerve, but he sassed back. About the third crack out of them about somebody Daly had maimed for life, "Hush your big mouth," said the negro to Corbett. "Come on out on that stage and I'll lick both of you." The first I knew of what was going on, the negro came running out on to the stage—it was too dark to see very well just what they were up to—with Corbett after him. I started off my marks fast. But, just as I reached the orchestra-pit, I heard a cold, hard, rasping voice from somewhere in the shadows back of me—the kind of voice a rattlesnake would have if it could talk:

"Corbett," it said, "lay a hand on that boy and I'm telling you now you'll never live to fight Sullivan."

I swung round. There behind me, with a hand in each coat-pocket ready for business, was Virgil Earp. I hadn't seen his face for several years, but you couldn't



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miss it, even in that bad light. I knew his fingers were on the triggers, but it was no time to be cautious. I rushed up to him, threw both arms round him as if he'd been my long-lost brother, pinning his hands to his sides, and started talking. I don't know what begging, pleading, cajoling nonsense I poured into his ears, all the while working my head and elbows overtime in gestures giving Corbett the office to get out of the theater while he still could run. Corbett got the idea, broke away from the negro and sprinted for the door, hurdling the orchestra-pit as he went. The negro dived for a backstage window, tore out one of the sash-weights, and started after him with it in his hand, looking for nothing short of murder. So I abandoned my loving embrace of Virgil Earp and dived for the negro. Once again my hysterical flow of persuasive language worked—at least it slowed him up till I could hear the door smash shut behind Corbett—and then I linked it after him. Jim had quite a start on me, but I made the hotel only about ten yards behind him. We never saw any more of San Bernardino's \$300, but we didn't complain. It was cheap at the price because, if Virgil Earp had ever pulled his guns, the world would have been out a heavyweight champion.

You can see why we preferred to fight a set-up when we could. But MacVeagh's act went bad on us once too—when he appeared in El Paso as the Texas Terror. He had outdone himself getting in with the local sports, particularly with one old coot who set up to be the

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authority on sporting matters for that whole end of Texas. A familiar type in the West forty and fifty years ago—he'd seen all the fights and all the walking-matches, all the horse-races, had made his pile in gold or silver, owned an old gun with several notches on the butt and a set of taller lies to match each notch, and was just made to fit the old line about "Shake the hand that shook the hand of John L. Sullivan." The old boy must have been hearing stories about our methods. Anyway, he started announcing early and often that when his pal the Texas Terror met Corbett, he himself was going to sit right behind the Texas Terror's corner and make sure no funny business took place. He didn't suspect MacVeagh, but he did suspect us.

It was a trifle embarrassing. But we figured that, between Corbett's unmistakable genius in the ring and MacVeagh's flawless acting, we could pull the wool over the eyes of any small-town sport in the world. And I must say that, when the great night arrived, with the old boy watching jealously from his front seat, I never saw the boys put on a better show. For the better part of four rounds it looked just like nip and tuck between them—Corbett weaving and side-stepping, landing on MacVeagh with deadly looking punches, MacVeagh coming right back with showers of rights and lefts that kept the crowd standing in their seats and yelling themselves hoarse—and then, toward the end of the fourth, MacVeagh pulled his great specialty of the mad bull's rush for victory. And Corbett dropped him as per sched-

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ule with a crack on the jaw that you could have heard in Juarez, across the river. It was a beautiful act by that time.

The crowd went mad over it. But it wasn't good enough for old Eagle-eyes. I don't know what he saw that tipped him off, but I saw what he did about it. He had a bottle of ammonia and a big sponge under his chair. He soaked one with the other and, before we knew what he was up to, had skipped through the ropes and slammed that sponge, reeking with ammonia, on MacVeagh's mouth and nose. It worked. Theoretically MacVeagh had been knocked so cold you couldn't have brought him to with a red-hot poker. But the ammonia fetched him on his feet like magic, choking, gasping and swearing, in a tenth of a split second. "Faker! Faker!" yelled the old sport, dancing round him like he was on fire. "You can't get away with that in my town!" The crowd gasped and then it roared. They were a good-natured lot, or, the West being what it was back then, we might well have been escorted out of town on a rail apiece. As it was, the occasion turned into an ovation for the old gent, while we had the pleasure of being wafted out of the theater on a gale of extremely unpleasant laughter.

When our tour was finished, we set up training-quarters in Loch Arbour, N. J., starting preparation for the fight, finally scheduled for early September in New Orleans. The barn we trained in was right across a little lake from two of the stiffest communities in the

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world. I don't mean high-hat, snobbish stiff, I mean pious stiff. Ocean Grove prohibited everything—you were liable to arrest if you smoked on the street. Asbury Park, next door, was a close second. It didn't quite prohibit everything, but the idea of having the heavyweight challenger training so close to its sacred precincts practically killed the famous Mr. Bradley, founder of Asbury Park. He worked himself into a fever trying to get us thrown out, but we were just over the line and could bid him defiance. We could have, that is, but we didn't. Instead, Corbett took to spending his evenings at Asbury Park, mixing with the crowd, in which process he naturally met Bradley. This tall, distinguished-looking, well-spoken gentleman was quite unlike what Bradley had expected in a professional pugilist. You could see it hit him right away, and, inside a week, Corbett had the old gentleman so mesmerized with his charm that he became one of his most ardent admirers. Why, when Corbett drove off to the station starting for New Orleans, it was Founder Bradley who sat beside him on the seat of the coach. That ought to give you some idea of what Corbett could be like when he turned on his personality. It was as astounding a spectacle as if the late William Jennings Bryan had been persuaded to preside at a convention of bartenders.

All this time, of course, I was not forgetting that the clean-up would come out of the theater rather than out of the ring. The script of "Gentleman Jack," thrown to order by a competent hack-dramatist named Charles

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T. Vincent, had been completed and, for relaxation during the tour and while we were training, I rehearsed Corbett in it until I had him whipped into beautiful shape. He was an actor from the word go anyway, but even the best amateur has to be taught not to saw with his hands and not to wiggle his feet and sway back and forth. As pugilist-plays went, "Gentleman Jack" was a masterpiece—from any other point of view, it was nothing to get excited about. But it didn't have to be. And the main point to it was that, following my instructions, Vincent had so constructed it that the distinctive angle of Corbett, the novelty of a gentleman-fighter, which we were going to plug to a fare-ye-well, stuck out of it like a sore thumb. The hero was a college boxing champion, in love with a pretty girl—he went into the professional ring to pay off the mortgage on her father's old homestead, or something like that—and the last act was the big fight for the championship, with a crowd of supers going wild on knock-down bleachers and an actual prize-fight on the stage. I needn't mention that the hero won, nor that, in order not to make fools of ourselves with a play like that, which we were going to produce after the Sullivan fight, Corbett was going to have to whip Sullivan. But, as I rehearsed the role of Gentleman Jack's father-in-law opposite Corbett day after day, in the intervals of training, the whole thing looked perfectly practical. It looked that way to Corbett too.

Strictly speaking, I suppose I had no business taking



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up the job of developing a heavyweight champion as casually as I did, seeing as how I was a stranger to the business of handling fighters. But showmanship is the major part of handling a fighter—and besides I was no stranger to the world of sports in general. In my career at the Press Club I'd got in on the inside of the sporting life of the day, seen all the big sporting events, picked up spare change by writing sporting squibs for the papers. And I knew something about fighting on my own hook. We fought all the time on the Bowery, not only rough-and-tumble impromptu brawls, but formal, stand-up matches too, with seconds and water-buckets and regular rules—the old, grueling, London Prize Ring rules in my time. On one occasion, I remember, a German boy and I fought fifty rounds in Washington Mews. It's a prettified and prosperous little street now, full of studios and polite conversation, but in my day it was all stables and the favorite spot for secluded milling. After all, you see, the psychology of fighting is much the same whether the fighters are professionals or kids having it out with each other.

The psychology we used for the New Orleans fight wasn't exactly deep stuff, but it worked. What with one fiendish device and another we had Sullivan completely buffaloed, licked before he stepped into the ring. About a week in advance I had the main railway lines to New Orleans sown with screeching lithograph posters announcing in foot high letters that James J. Corbett, champion of the world, would appear at Madi-



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son Square Garden, New York, the week after the fight. Every barn, fence and chicken-house going south displayed one of those; unless Sullivan traveled in a blind-fold, he would see nothing else for two days in advance of defending his title. When he got to New Orleans, the place was stiff with them. And we didn't let it go at that—we kept right on persecuting him clear into the fight itself.

Sullivan was even more superstitious than most sporting figures and luckily, the Olympic A. C. in New Orleans, where the fight was to take place, had a convenient superstition of its own, which claimed that almost every boxer who sat in a certain corner of the ring came out winner. When Charlie Johnson, Sullivan's backer, came to our dressing-room the night of the fight to toss for corners, I said I'd rather toss in Sullivan's presence, so he could have no possible kick. He and I went to Sullivan's dressing-room together. The old man-killer was lying on a couch, looking worried, saying nothing—just glared at me and grunted. But he looked just as big and brawny as he ever had when I'd seen him in New York in his palmiest days. Being an actor comes in handy lots of places. Whatever I was feeling, I looked him in the eye and grinned as confidently as you please.

Johnson tossed the coin and I called heads. Heads it was.

"Which corner do you take?" Johnson asked.

"Which corner?" I shouted, suddenly raucously ex-

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ultant, "which corner do I take?" I crossed over and stood in front of Sullivan, shouting into his face, apparently mad with joy and confidence, "The same corner you'd take, Johnson—the lucky corner!" And then I turned and went tearing out of the room, shouting at the top of my lungs: "We've got the lucky corner! We've got the lucky corner!" It was one of the better acts of my life, and it must have told on John L.

We also managed to get him on the standard superstition that the first man to enter the ring is the last to leave it—meaning he'll leave it feet first. That was a pet notion of Sullivan's—he always tried to jockey his opponent into entering the ring before him and then appearing himself for a tremendous, soul-stirring ovation that would impress the other fellow. At fight-time, however, we stalled and stalled until we got word that Sullivan was on his way in. When we got within eye-shot of the ring, I saw it had been a dodge to trick us. The ring was empty and the crowd impatient. I held Corbett back. "Wait, Jim," I said, and turned round to see Sullivan coming along behind us, having been tipped off about our movements. We were blocking the aisle when he came up with us, glaring and snorting.

"You're the champion, Sullivan," I said, "after you."

After some backing and filling, we actually did force him to go ahead of us. And, as I neared the ring, I took particularly good care to shout to everybody in sight, good and loud, so Sullivan couldn't fail to hear me:

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“The first to enter, the last to leave, you know—the first to enter, the last to leave!”

It was only fair at that. Sullivan had scared so many opponents half to death in his day that he had it coming to him. Besides, I'd been having my moments of uneasiness and I needed to reassure myself by acting as cocky as the traffic would bear. The atmosphere of New Orleans was anything but reassuring. If Corbett really could whip Sullivan, as he and I believed, he and I were the only sane people in the country. The rest of the world had no more doubt of Sullivan's impregnability than they doubted the sun's rising the next morning. No champion since has had quite such a reputation, not even Jack Dempsey, who was the finest natural fighter I ever saw. The more I saw of the crowd that had assembled to see the fight, the more I began to wonder if we had bitten off more than we could chew. Corbett had no doubts about it. When I dropped in to take up some details with him the afternoon before the fight, he just laughed at my worried countenance.

“Bill,” he said, “forget it. I can lick him without mussing my hair.” No doubt he was thinking back to the evening in San Francisco when he'd stepped round Sullivan the way a weasel would step around a woodchuck. But I hadn't seen that with my own eyes—and what's more, it wasn't unlikely that Sullivan pulling his punches in an exhibition before ladies was a different pair of sleeves from Sullivan, goaded into fury

by well-calculated persecution, deliberately setting out to teach a lesson to an upstart dude, as he undoubtedly thought Corbett was. So did everybody else in New Orleans.

When I left Corbett that afternoon, I wandered into the lobby of the St. Charles Hotel, the headquarters of the fight crowd, and experienced my worst moment. The lobby was full of men and talk and smoke and money—wads of money offered on Sullivan at 4 to 1, with no takers to mention. Only freak bets were attracting much interest—bets that Corbett wouldn't dare show up in the ring—that the fight wouldn't go a single round—that Sullivan would kill him—that at least he'd make him jump out of the ring and run for his life—that kind of thing. I had \$3000 in my pocket, and I began to wonder if it wouldn't be the better part of valor to lay it on Sullivan at these long odds. That kind of hedging is standard practice among fight-managers to this day—a kind of insurance. But then, as I felt the wad in my pocket, I couldn't make up my mind. Sullivan looked and sounded tough—any time of day he was formidable—but I figured him as past his prime, he hadn't fought for six years, his reputation just had to be overinflated—and I knew the shape Corbett was in and what he could do. Sullivan, soft and aging, ripening for a fall some time—Corbett young, strong, a diabolical master of ring-science—should I bet with the crowd, who still thought of Sullivan as the invincible killer, or trust my own five senses? At

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that point I went out and took a turn round the block to think it over.

The second time round my mind was made up. I marched in and up to Steve Brodie of Brooklyn Bridge fame, who was strutting round waving a sheaf of bills and shouting for Sullivan. I stuck my own roll under his nose and shouted back:

“Three thousand on Corbett!”

“Four to one?” he asked, gaping at me.

“Done,” I said, and walked away. It hadn’t been enough to gamble my whole future on Corbett’s winning—I’d had to go and put my last cent on him as well. I felt a little sick, but there was nothing to do about it.

Sullivan had two more psychological punches coming, and both landed right on the button. One was Corbett’s behavior in the ring before hostilities began. Sullivan was sitting scowling in his corner, arms folded, jaw thrust out, a cross between a cigar-store Indian and a lion waiting to spring. Corbett skipped in between the ropes, looked at Sullivan and smiled sweetly, went dancing round in a brisk minute or two of shadow boxing, and then caught the attention of the whole crowd by a stunt they’d never seen before—backing into the ropes and bouncing off them with a punch exploiting the momentum of the bounce. Sullivan was staring, too, in spite of himself. When the referee called them together in the center, Corbett, smiling and carefree, walked up to John L. and held out his hand as if he were approach-



ing a dangerous mastiff whom he knew he could tame. But Sullivan knocked his hand aside in a contemptuous fury. Corbett laughed in his face and shrugged his shoulders, saying in pantomime as plainly as if he'd spoken. "All right, mister, if you want it that way." It was just what the doctor ordered.

The second punch came in the third. The crowd didn't like the new boxing at all. As Corbett danced round Sullivan, feinting, side-stepping, staying away and wearing him down, they booed him for a coward. "Go on and fight, you dancing master!" was all you heard. Finally Corbett stopped dead in his tracks, ignoring the lumbering Sullivan, held up his hands and deliberately shushed the crowd, saying in another bit of eloquent pantomime: "Just wait a minute; you'll get your money's worth." And then, as Sullivan rushed him, he went into his dance again. That piece of audacity jolted John L. clear back on his psychological heels.

Up to that point things were going swimmingly. But Corbett got impatient after the second, started telling me that it was a cinch—he could go right in and finish Sullivan off any time. So far John L. hadn't put a glove on him, and he was wearing down according to schedule—but all the same one stray punch from the old master's crushing right could still ruin everything. I was frantic with apprehension, for everything meant not only the championship, but "Gentleman Jack" as well. And "Gentleman Jack" was going to make us a



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fortune. So the most urgent thing I could think of to say was:

"Jim, Jim, you've got to wait. Remember 'Gentleman Jack'—for the Lord's sake, remember 'Gentleman Jack' and do what I tell you!"

But Corbett's fighting blood was up and he was beyond worrying about "Gentleman Jack." After the fourth he took the bit in his teeth and waltzed in, coolly, cannily, scientifically cutting Sullivan to ribbons, readying him for the kill. How John L. ever stayed on his feet for the twenty-one rounds it lasted, I never can tell you. It just wasn't in him to quit, that's all. I was so nervous through it all that, after the fight, I discovered I'd eaten most of the palm-leaf fan I had in my hand.

The end of it was a picture, triumphant and yet tragic. There stood Corbett, obviously good for fifty rounds more, not a hair mussed as he had promised, not a mark on his face. Nobody ever put a mark on Jim Corbett—after a long ring career his Roman nose was just as shapely as ever. And here lay the great Sullivan, red with blood, prone on the blood-soaked sand, symbolizing for the dumbfounded crowd the end of the whole old tradition of fighters. Licked as he was, the old gladiator was still the gamest of the game. When they got him to his feet, he staggered to the ropes, lifted one huge paw for silence and trumpeted out:

"The pitcher went to the well once too often. I was

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licked by a better man. But thank God he's an American!"

You can imagine—or maybe you can't—how it feels to call your shot on winning the world's heavyweight championship. We were delirious and so was the whole of New Orleans. But we didn't forget business just the same. The fight had already crowded the presidential campaign off the front pages, but we made sure of cracking them wide open again, and planting Corbett in the public mind as the gentleman pugilist once and for all, by his actions after the victory. It was traditional, of course, for the winner to go on a colossal binge after the fight, painting the town red in an open-handed carousal that sometimes lasted a month. But not our man. After the fight he returned to the Y.M.C.A., where he had trained, drank a large glass of pure, innocent milk and retired decorously to rest. And you can be sure we made certain that the gentlemen of the press got the full effect of the picture.

On the winner-take-all basis, we got \$25,000 out of the fight. But that was chicken-feed compared with what started rolling in as we began cleaning up in the wake of the lithographs which had so annoyed Sullivan. In ten days we took in \$16,000 profit. Fifteen thousand people met us at the station in New York, and Madison Square Garden was jammed that night to see him box a few rounds with a sparring partner. When we gave a benefit for Sullivan—John L. hadn't got a cent out of his defeat, you see—with Corbett and

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the old warrior sparring with big gloves, the new champion's prestige plus the old champion's popularity made \$20,000 profit to hand over to John L. A real champion is always even more popular in defeat—they flocked to the station to cheer Sullivan too, almost as many of them as cheered us.

All this made our approaching theatrical adventure with "Gentleman Jack" a perfect set-up. Everywhere we took it, you couldn't have squeezed in another paying customer with a shoe-horn. I won't say the crowds were mostly women, but it seemed that way at the time. The female of the species raised more sand over Jim Corbett than I ever saw raised over any matinee-idol in the business. They got in our hair, they clogged our mail, they made themselves the worst nuisances possible—and we took it and liked it, because it meant good business. Not that there weren't disadvantages. One irate gentleman, finding that the lady of his affections had a picture of Corbett on her dressing-table, took a shot at him. In another town it cost us thousands to choke off an alienation of affections suit, and we always had to live besieged by hordes of frantic lady admirers. But we were cashing in too, and don't forget it.

We may have missed a trick somewhere, but I don't see how. We didn't invent the testimonial racket, which has been so popular in modern times, but I think we were the first ever to exploit it clean to the hilt—with immense profits. I remember coming into Corbett's

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hotel room in Toledo one afternoon and finding a man fooling round with a batch of plaster of Paris. He'd made a cast of Corbett's right hand and was cleaning up preparatory to departing.

"What's all this?" I said.

"Nothing," said Corbett. "This man wants to make a cast of my hand and make paperweights of it, that's all."

"Oh, he does?" said I. In one step I'd crossed the room, picked up the cast and smashed it to bits. "It's a good idea," I said, "but it's going to cost him a thousand dollars to do it." It did cost him just that, and, on a rough estimate, he must have made \$50,000 out of the deal. Everywhere you went for the next year, you saw that paperweight cast of the hand that had finally clubbed the great John L. off his throne.

We lived high on our immense profits. And we were always careful to do things elegantly as well as lavishly. It wasn't necessary to put it on—that was Corbett's natural instinct. Where Sullivan's grand gesture had been to march into a barroom under the elevated, throw a pocketful of silver on the bar—his pockets were always bulging with silver—and call for drinks on the house, Corbett's style was to enter a crystal-lighted hotel dining-room and open wine for the company at some ten times the expense. His hotel bill during our tours with "Gentleman Jack" averaged round a thousand a week—the money went out in bucketfuls, but it was coming in by tankfuls, so it didn't matter. And he wasn't just

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blowing it in, easy come, easy go. The first thing he did after collecting the fight-purse was to sink seven thousand in a piece of Bronx real estate, which eventually brought him in \$85,000. People sensed good taste about him. When he'd come into Delmonico's late in the afternoon, the time when everybody came to Delmonico's, and sit down at a big table alone, it wouldn't be ten minutes before it was standing room only at that table—great actors, judges, lawyers, financiers would be crowding round, with Corbett's ready wit and instinctive courtesy as an attraction that would have worked whether he was champion or not. We didn't snub the barrooms either, of course. Part of our act on striking a new town with "Gentleman Jack" was to pay a visit to the local hangout of the sporting element, show ourselves, buy drinks for the boys, and talk shop. But Delmonico's was where we belonged.

There was only one bad omen. And we didn't know yet that it was a bad omen. No sooner had Corbett got back to his dressing-room after the Sullivan fight than a pair of grotesquely broad shoulders and a flaming red head appeared in the transom over a door, and a harsh voice called in:

"Hey, Jim! I can lick you and I want first chance!"

Corbett looked up and scowled.

"Beat it, you freak!" he yelled back. He had no use for this spindle-shanked, freckle-faced Bob Fitzsimmons.







## *Chapter IV*

ALL THIS HIGH-POWERED FIGHT STUFF NEEDN'T GIVE YOU the idea that I was neglecting the theatrical end of my private saga. Even in the middle of preparations for the Corbett-Sullivan fight I was battling to break in on Broadway as a real top-flight manager. Plays like "After Dark" had already made me well known on the circuit of low-priced melodrama theaters that started on the Bowery and covered the whole country east of the Mississippi. But what I wanted now was to move uptown—to Union Square and beyond—and sit down alongside the seats of the mighty.

Nowadays anybody's bankroll and anybody's production stand as good—or as bad—a chance as anybody else's in the American theater. You never know whether it's a Wall Street broker or the late Dutch Schultz or a big movie company that's backing a show. But forty years ago the uptown—and also upstage—world of people like Augustin Daly and A. M. Palmer looked with considerable suspicion on a cheeky kid addicted to prize-fighting and melodrama. It was extremely unhandy for me. When I tried to persuade

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Mrs. Pat Campbell to come to America, years before anybody else succeeded, she only smiled and shook her head and said: "But I hear you handle pugs, Mr. Brady." When I was put up for the Lambs, I was blackballed because some members were afraid I might bring Jim Corbett the prize-fighter into the club. Years later, when Corbett himself was put up for the Lambs, he had more favorable comments after his name than anybody in the history of the organization. But meanwhile we were in the doghouse.

My first effort at crashing Broadway might have suggested that I was trying to get out of the doghouse by way of the menagerie. Several brands of youthful hopefulness blinded and backed me into that one. Niblo's Garden, the old theater at Broadway and Houston Street where "The Black Crook" and Lydia Thompson and her British Blondes had first appeared, had broken out with a play called "Nero," containing Wilton Lackaye as star and, what caught my eye even sooner, a troupe of performing lions. The play wasn't going well. When I got talking business, I acquired the whole production at a very reasonable figure from its discomfited managers. It was partly the lions—I figured lions were a novelty on the stage and something could be done with them—partly my eagerness to have a play, any old play, on Broadway, and partly the fact that acquiring "Nero" would enable me to put a girl named Marie Rene into the female lead. When I first met her she was a "transformation dancer"—did a turn in which

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she shed one costume after another, Irish one moment, Scotch the next, French the next, layer by layer, with dances to match—quite a popular stunt in those times, even if it did make the poor girl go on stage wearing as many clothes as a Chinaman off for a two-months' sea voyage. She afterwards became the first Mrs. William A. Brady and the mother of Alice Brady.

My reasoning had its points, but "Nero" was a poor show at best and not even the lions could save it. I booked it round a couple of places with less and less success. Oscar Hammerstein was stuck for an attraction at his Harlem Opera House and guaranteed me \$1500 for a week of "Nero," sight unseen. When he had a look at what he'd bought the night we opened, he came out into the lobby as the audience left and addressed them as follows:

"Ladies and gentlemen," he said. "This play is a fraud. I have it here for a week. I hope nobody will come to see it."

And in Holmes' Theater, Brooklyn, where we had another discouraging engagement, the liveliest of the lions got us an extremely dangerous reputation by coming within half an inch of jumping the barrier out into the audience. Add to that that I didn't get on well with Lackaye, the star, and you can see why I was willing to let "Nero" fold up on me. But there were the lions, such as they were, and I still figured them as a drawing-card of some sort. So to fill out an evening's running-time, I put Keller the magician on the same

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bill with the cats and started out to see what would happen.

They were German lions—the first Hagenbeck lions, I think, to come to this country. A German fellow named Darling had been sent over to exhibit them. There was also a dog in the act, a Great Dane who was the mainspring of the outfit. If Darling got into difficulties with the cats, the dog would jump in front of him and snarl them into submission. He could have licked them all at one time if necessary. And when Darling got too tight to get home, the dog would fetch him as efficiently as if he'd been a patrol-wagon on four legs; there was one occasion when Darling got into a row with some toughs in a saloon and the dog cleaned out the whole joint in about thirty seconds flat.

That Brooklyn audience really didn't need to get so scared when they saw the lion barely miss leaping the spiked barrier into the orchestra. Those cats were so harmless that once when Darling was too drunk to go on, I volunteered to go into the cage and put them through their paces myself. But Darling was not too drunk to put a stop to that, claiming angrily that that would disillusion the public about his daring. Why, the German boy he had hired to clean the the cages hadn't been on the job ten days when he was waltzing right in among the cats and sweeping them round the cage along with the dirt as if they'd been so many sheep!

The boy distinguished himself even more signally

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late one closing night when one of the cats got nasty and wouldn't get out of the storage-cage and into the little portable cage we used to transfer the livestock into the circus-wagon which was backed up to the stage-door. Ordinarily we lassoed the lion from outside and dragged him in by the neck. But this time the biggest brute, the only one that ever showed any spirit, backed off into a far corner of the storage-cage and refused to budge. It was darkish back there. The theater was empty of everybody but us and the lions. I must say that animal looked pretty tough as he sat there, braced against the rope, opening his mouth and swearing cat-fashion. Darling had stepped round the corner to the saloon every time we got another lion stowed, and by the time we struck this last one he was drunk as a hoot-owl and just about as useless. But the German boy, who wanted to get home to bed, I guess, took charge of the situation. He walked right into the cage—it wasn't much over four feet high, so he had to stoop way over—marched up to the lion and whacked him across the nose with a broom-handle. All that got him was a short and highly nasty roar. More broom-handle, till he broke it over the lion's back, but no action. Finally, he lost patience and hauled off and socked the lion right in the jaw. "Schweinhund!" he said, and reached over and got a grip on his mane and walked him across the cage like a sheep-killing dog. Then, as he ducked through the door into the portable cage, the kid gave him a kick behind for good



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measure. I've never been much on this king-of-beasts stuff since that evening.

That was worth seeing, I suppose, but I didn't feel so badly when rumors about the scare in Brooklyn, plus the fact that business was terrible, forced Darling and me to part company. We couldn't get any more theaters to book us.

There was also an unfortunate flavor to our adventures in the great Chicago World's Fair of 1893. Fleischmann, the yeast-man, had built a big German restaurant at the Fair, with a swimming-pool attached—four bits for a swim to work up an appetite and then knockwurst and sauerkraut and beer to match. The restaurant was doing all right, but the swimming-pool was pretty empty. No world's fair ever takes in much the first couple of months and this one was no exception. So, what with the S.R.O. business we were doing with Corbett in "Gentleman Jack," I had little difficulty in persuading Fleischmann to floor over the swimming-pool, install seats and a stage at one end and let us put on a pugilistic-athletic exhibition instead. We carried our point over the protests of the staid citizenry of Chicago, who were outraged that their beautiful fair, the apple of their civic eye, should be polluted by the presence of a low-down prize-fighter.

The two features of our show were Corbett sparring with Jim Daly, his touring partner, and—until we tried it out anyway—Daly boxing with a kangaroo that turned up from Australia at the psychological mo-



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ment. Originally, we planned to have Corbett box the kangaroo, but the possibility of his getting accidentally damaged ruled that out on second thought. We asked Daly if he'd mind taking the Australian on—why not? He said sure—he didn't even bother with a rehearsal—said he'd carry the poor beast along for a while and give the audience its money's worth.

None of us had ever seen a kangaroo in the ring before. You've probably seen them in circuses since—they do box naturally with their dinky little forelegs. What we didn't know was that they also have a habit of tipping back on their huge tails and letting fly with their tremendous hind legs with a kick that, under the right circumstances, will tear a man open. Daly found out about that when, for our first show, he got into the ring with the gentleman from Australia. He fainted and then slapped the kangaroo one on the jaw to see how he liked it. The kangaroo reared back, unwound one hind leg and knocked Daly clean across the ring. The audience howled with delight—and I howled with laughter. Daly's expression as he picked himself up was something choice.

"I'll fix this long-legged devil," he said, as soon as he got his breath back, and waded in. The Australian didn't have a chance to get set for another kick. It was clip, clip, clip, as fast as Daly could land with both fists, and then a crusher on the side of the head that laid the kangaroo out cold. It was all of a week before he'd recovered, and in the meantime the feature of the

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show was gone just when we needed it most. Business was bad enough anyway.

But we were all having a good time at the Fair, so it didn't matter much. Corbett in particular was enjoying himself hugely. There were two men who caused palpitations of the heart in all lady visitors to the Midway. One was Corbett, lean, handsome, magnetic. The other was a Sudanese, an item in the polyglot collection of nationalities which was on display along with the farm implements and the dynamos and the cooch dancing. They had got together South Sea Islanders, African cannibals, Eskimos, tag-ends of races from Central Asia, besides representatives of all civilized nations. And the Sudanese was the jewel of the collection—tall and slender, with the finest eyes I ever saw in a human head, long, waving black hair oiled up to the nines, a profile like a Greek coin and a chocolaty, velvety skin which was perfectly set off by a kind of milk-white toga he wore. A black greyhound of a man.

Pretty soon Corbett had picked himself out one special girl to pay attention to—a red-headed colleen from the Irish exhibit, pretty as a picture. And it was presently evident that the Sudanese also thought she was pretty nice. He never said a word to her, just mooned round and struck highly effective poses and let his liquid eyes rest on her mighty obviously. The whole Fair was talking about it in no time, but the Irish girl and Corbett paid little attention.

The blow-off came in the big café where the person-

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nel of the Fair used to forgather for a high old time after the gates closed and the visitors were all gone—the most outlandish conglomeration of showmen, exotic nationalities and hangers-on that will be seen till Judgment Day, collaborating in a combination bean-feast and flag-raising that always lasted till daylight and ended up in a riot on an average of twice a week. This particular night the Sudanese worked up his nerve to make the break. He walked majestically up to the table where Corbett and the Irish girl were sitting and, ignoring Corbett, spoke to the girl. Corbett jumped to his feet, raging in English, and the Sudanese answered back in his language, which seemed quite adequate for the purpose. I saw a knife flash like a striking snake and Corbett's hand went to his shoulder. The Sudanese had taken a slice out of him. Instantly, all over the room, weapons came flashing into sight—every variety of yata-ghan, dirk, kris, stiletto, claspknife and bayonet known to the science of cold steel. In a split second the room had divided into opposing camps—all Europeans and Americans behind Corbett, all Malays and Chinese and odd racial pickings behind the other fellow—and it was mostly the latter who had weapons. But no knife was quicker than Corbett's left—he tapped his man once on the chin, he went out like a light, and then we turned and shoved our way out before any more of the Tower of Babel got into action.

The Fair authorities hushed that little party up pretty well. But they also requested us to pack up and

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get out to avoid further trouble. We didn't need to be told twice. The whole non-white contingent was going armed, looking for Corbett, and he didn't even reappear at the Fair grounds.

When we returned to New York headquarters, we found plenty of other people looking for us—also with knives, figuratively speaking. The pugilistic world had not yet reconciled itself to the way Corbett had stepped in ahead of the pack to nail the Sullivan fight. There were four or five fighters who firmly believed that they could have licked John L. just as well as we could, and felt they should have got first call. No doubt some of them were right, too. But, right or wrong, all we heard on all sides was untactful remarks to the effect that (a) Sullivan had been old and flabby and a pushover—these were the same fellows who, before the fight, had been maintaining that John L. would make Corbett jump out of the ring and (b) Corbett was just a master boxer, not a fighter at all, and why didn't he take on somebody who could lick him? It was obvious that we'd have to answer that question pretty quickly.

We had a formidable field to contend with. There was the new Irishman, Peter Maher, a rugged, ugly, bore-in-and-get-it-over-with fighter—Frank Slavin, the Australian, a better boxer of the same type—and Bob Fitzsimmons, whose star was rising steadily all the while, the huge-bodied, skinny-legged freak, who had murder in both blacksmith's arms and appalling amounts of fighting sense and courage in his scraggy red head. The

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worst of it was that all these men were the kind of fighters least suited to Corbett's style. Cleverness in boxing has its limits. There's no telling when a wild slugger will batter down the most expert defense and land one crushing punch to put a fine sparrer out of business. That was why Corbett was particularly justified in having a considerable case of "ring-fear"—the shyness about defending the title which hits almost all champions as soon as they reach the top. It isn't really fear with a man of Corbett's fighting courage—it's just the result of realizing that luck plays its part in boxing, too, and that, whereas the challenger has everything to gain in fighting, the champion has everything to lose. That was the vantage point from which we had to contemplate this aggressive array of rugged, battering challengers, all able to take punishment till the cows came home and all packing punches.

About that time Charley Mitchell, the gamest little Cockney who ever put up his dukes, returned from England to add the final complication to the picture. If anybody should have had the Sullivan fight, Mitchell was the man. He'd already fought Sullivan twice—once in New York to no decision, once in Chantilly, France, to a draw, which ended up with both men in jail. And he came loaded for bear. With him was a man he was handling, Jim Hall, an Australian heavyweight who had beaten Fitzsimmons in Australia, and a fellow named Squire Abingdon Baird with half the Bank of England in his pocket to back Mitchell and Hall with.



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They wanted a Mitchell-Corbett fight and a Hall-Fitzsimmons fight. The Hall-Fitzsimmons thing came off in New Orleans and a week later, after Hall was beaten, Baird was found dead in his room in the St. Charles Hotel with only ten cents in his pocket. They tried to make out it was suicide.

In the meantime, however, Mitchell's tongue, which could take the hair off at fifty yards, and Baird's money, had got Corbett where they wanted him. Mitchell rode Corbett the way the bench rides the opposition pitcher, and his command of Billingsgate was something to hear. It wasn't unusual in those times for a fighter trying to get a match to accost his man in a barroom and, in the old conventional phrase, challenge him to come down in the cellar, throw the key away and see who was the better man on the spot. Shouted out above the conversation, with every man in the place listening, that was an impressive stunt. But Mitchell was the only man I ever saw who meant it. If Corbett had said yes, Charley would have been down the cellar stairs in two shakes.

But Jim was still cool enough to let it go. He made much the same answer as old Peter Jackson, the brave Australian negro, when a fighter invited him to come down cellar and throw away the key.

"Mister," said Jackson, "I don't know how you feel about it, but I'd rather get some money when I fight. That's my business."

Mitchell had the answer to that too. Baird and he



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announced that they would post \$50,000 with the New York *World* as a side-bet for a Corbett match. That was an unheard-of sum for those times, and I suspected that, flush as Baird might be, it was a bluff. But it was a bluff that had to be called, and I told Corbett so.

"Bill," he said, "I don't like this man. After what he's said and done to me, I'm afraid of what might happen if I got into the ring with him."

Still I insisted and he gave in. Raising our end was simple as one, two, three. I didn't have to put up a cent. All I did was drop into Delmonico's and whisper in a few big gamblers' ears that Charley Mitchell was betting that much on himself at even money on a match with Corbett. "I'll take any part of it," was the invariable answer. I could have got \$200,000 just as easily.

The next day we appeared in the *World* office to meet Baird and Mitchell. Mitchell slapped down \$50,000 on the table, I slapped down \$50,000 on top of it and said:

"The match is made."

At that point Mitchell got busy, oiled up his tongue and started abusing Corbett in language that crisped the papers on the table and made the very ink blush. Corbett was green with rage—Mitchell had finally got his goat for fair—and leaped across the room at him. I got between.

"A fine champion you are, Corbett," said Mitchell, "letting little Brady protect you." Corbett threw me aside and went after Mitchell hammer and tongs. It

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looked as if the match was to be fought out then and there. In two minutes the office was a total wreck and by the time we got them quieted down, Mitchell's purpose was completely accomplished. Corbett and I were so frantic that we'd have fought for nothing. By imposing one and another impossible condition Mitchell and Baird got the side-bet whittled down to \$5000 without our even knowing just how they did it. I even bet Mitchell two to one in thousands that he wouldn't dare get into the ring—and had the pleasure of paying him \$2000 in cash when he skipped through the ropes at Jacksonville. But I don't grudge it—he was a game little devil and never got another penny out of the fight, since it was on a winner-take-all basis. And, if he'd suggested it, he could have had anything up to half the purse on the quiet.

The best offer we got from a location for the fight came from Jacksonville, Florida. Those times St. Augustine was about the only place in Florida that anybody ever went to. The inhabitants were just starting the build-up which culminated in the late-lamented boom in those parts. Mitchell trained at St. Augustine and we trained at Mayport at the mouth of the St. Johns River. Croquet was the favorite relaxation at our camp. Corbett's most earnest antagonist at this harmless sport was Jack Dempsey—not the present popular restaurateur, but the old "Nonpareil"; the middleweight wonder who had been broken and almost half-witted since his terrific beating from Fitz-

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simmons the year before in New Orleans. We'd hired him as a sparring partner for Corbett half out of charity, but he earned his pay and to spare during the fight when he thought quicker and acted faster than any of us in a great emergency.

All the while we were in training, Mitchell kept firing hot shots at Corbett, to keep him in a blind rage until the fight. He was always ready with a grin and a scornful crack. When we got a record-breaking thunderstorm, Mitchell cocked his ear at the thunder-peals: "Listen to that, boys," he said to the reporters. "That must be that Yankee dude punching the bag over at Mayport. Just 'ear 'im!"

I got my share too—when I'd be over at Mitchell's camp making arrangements, he'd say:

"I say, Brady, you'll want a doctor in that Yankee dude's corner, you know." That was a favorite of Max Baer's but Mitchell invented it. Or else he'd kid me about that thousand-dollar bet—and Mitchell's kidding was about as gentle as a Florida hurricane. I knew he was working the same psychological game on us that we had worked on Sullivan, but he was clever and there was nothing to do about it.

We were there at the express invitation of the most prominent citizens of Jacksonville, which should have smoothed our path considerably. But the State of Florida, particularly Governor Mitchell, felt about us much the same way the citizens of Chicago had. For a while, it looked as if we'd have to call the fight off or

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move it to some other state. Florida had no anti-prize-fighting law, but that didn't make any difference to the governor. He said no. Jacksonville took it to court, fought it clear through to the State Supreme Court. While the case was pending, the governor summoned the militia and camped them round the arena that Jacksonville had built to stage the fight in, a young army with the sole purpose of keeping the fair name of Florida from being besmirched by prizefighting. When rumors arose that we were going to take the fight into Georgia, the governor of Georgia lined the border with his own militia and announced to the world that no bruisers would be allowed to come and pollute the holy soil of Gawjuh, suh! We were about as popular as a colony of lepers trying to register at an Atlantic City hotel, in spite of everything Jacksonville itself could do.

The night before the fight the Supreme Court of Florida handed down a verdict sweepingly in our favor and we could laugh at the governor. But it was too late to save the fight from being a financial flop. For weeks the papers all over the country had been playing up our difficulties with the governor, and the fight fans who would ordinarily have swarmed to see Corbett defend his title had decided that there was no use traveling all the way from New York and Chicago when there probably wouldn't be any fight. What's more, the militia stuck around regardless, armed with guns and bayonets and, when we opened the gates for the fight,

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we found all the best seats full of uniformed men, armed to the teeth, paying nothing and refusing to get out. There was nothing whatever to do about it—no police, no nothing. We had to sink or swim on our own.

Back of Mitchell's corner sat Bat Masterson, the famous Western man-killer, and another gunman named Converse, with two guns apiece to make sure Mitchell's interests were properly looked after. We had our own artillery back of Corbett's corner. As it happened, their services weren't needed. But there was no telling that beforehand. Only a few nights before the fight Corbett's collie, who always slept across the foot of the champion's bed, had roused up and flushed an intruder on the porch of the training-quarters. Corbett had taken a shot into the dark and been fired back at.

Just to make sure that fight was one of the weirdest mills ever staged, our referee was Honest John Kelly, a baseball umpire new to boxing. In time he became a famous referee, but then he knew as much about the rules as the governor of Florida. It was a good thing from Corbett's point of view, for, if Kelly had known his stuff, Mitchell would have won on a foul before the party was well begun.

Now that he had Corbett where he wanted him, Mitchell kept right on with his goat-getting. He kept us waiting for ten minutes after we got into the ring, with Corbett's rage getting nearer the boiling-point every minute. When he finally skipped blithely into



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the ring, he fired a string of the choicest epithets in his Cockney vocabulary at Corbett as he reached his corner. And, when the fight began, he drew first blood—a lucky left on Corbett's nose that started a little bleeding. That meant a lot in boxing psychology forty years ago.

He never stopped talking—a stream of beautifully calculated insult and obscenity flowed smoothly from his mouth all the while he was within hearing distance of the champion. Corbett's angered flush got darker and darker during the first round. In the second, he went clean loco, tore into Mitchell—and don't forget Jim Corbett could hit with both hands, as well as outspar anybody in the world—and clubbed the little fellow to his knees. At the count of four Mitchell got up and then sank to his knees again without being struck, just to get another nine counts to talk to Corbett in. There he knelt, cocky and saucy, snarling lurid comment on Corbett's ancestry and past, present and future. A wooden Indian couldn't have stood it. Corbett shoved the referee on one side and socked Mitchell while he was on his knees—a rank, unmistakable foul.

Back of both corners the gunmen were on their feet with revolvers drawn for action. The crowd was making noise for ten times its size. It was old Jack Dempsey who saved the day. He leaped into the ring, with me after him, faced Corbett, slapped him violently in the face and drove him away from Mitchell.

Our entering the ring was a second foul. Mitchell's



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seconds could have called their man to his corner and claimed the fight won without our having a ghost of a chance to dispute it. But they missed their chance. I wouldn't be surprised if Mitchell had refused to take the fight that way, being sure he could win by following up these tactics. What with the noise and the danger of gun-play, Kelly had forgotten all he ever knew about the rules. He merely chased me and Dempsey out of the ring and motioned the fighters to go on. By that time it was all right—Dempsey's slap had sobered Corbett up, snapped him out of it—and from then on Mitchell's jabberings had no effect. In fact, at the end of the second, Mitchell fouled Corbett by hitting him after the bell rang. He kept on rushing the champion, game as a bantam rooster, but the jig was up and he knew it. In due time Corbett stretched him on the ropes and it was all over. But it had been a near thing and no mistake.

We got the \$25,000 purse that Jacksonville had put up and the \$5000 side-bet. Mitchell got nothing. Corbett was right when, shortly before he died, he said to me:

“Bill, we were just twenty years before our time.”

Nobody else got anything, since Kelly had declared all individual bets off, in view of the dubious nature of the proceedings. Still, we'd defended the title successfully and could go back to the business of cleaning up in the theater. The tradition of the matinee-idol was at its height then and here was a champion who

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was a matinee-idol too. That racket finally went out when the movies arrived to install the Wallace Reids and the Rudolph Valentinos and the Dustin Farnums in that spot. But it certainly came in handy for "Gentleman Jim."

It all began when I was a kid on the Bowery, with the appearance of a young actor named Henry J. Montague at Wallack's Theater. Hundreds of women used to collect at the stage-door every day just to watch Harry, as he was universally called, come out and get into his carriage—the kind of mob-adoration which has since been transferred to screen-idols, and on an even bigger scale. The word matinee-idol—the matinee being the big time for female attendance—was coined to suit his case. Small-time satirists had a fine time kidding the idea. We Bowery boys used to hang round Wallack's about the time the show broke and outrage Mr. Montague's admirers with the following song, sung at the top of our lungs:

"My name is Hildebrand Montrose  
Some folks they call me Cholly;  
In my buttonhole I wear a rose—  
My word! ain't that jolly? By golly!"

I was giving tongue to that effusion one afternoon at the theater when an elderly lady—Montague's fans were all ages, if only one sex—whaled me across the ear with

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an old-fashioned whalebone umbrella and put me out of commission for a whole day.

That bit of doggerel went all over the country. As publicity it was invaluable. Publicity brings money into the box-office—the women stormed the place—and Adonis though Montague was, it was impossible not to suspect that his management had something to do with stimulating the excitement. The kind of tactic used was invented by the great Commodore Joseph H. Tooker when he decided to bring over an English actor, also egregiously good-looking, named Charles Rignold, to play “Henry V” in competition with Montague’s romantic roles.

Tooker was, to my mind, the great American showman—a combination of P. T. Barnum and Morris Gest. He was the man who put over “The Black Crook,” the spectacular production which introduced the American theatrical public to females wearing tights, a costume which had previously been confined to the burlesque stage. You’ve undoubtedly heard of “The Black Crook,” but you may not know that about three-quarters of the furor it caused, both approving and disapproving, was cooked up by Tooker himself and not by the public at all. He deluged the press with anonymous letters, raving indignantly against the moral degeneracy of the show, defending it vigorously as a beautiful tribute to the female form divine, wrote sermons for ministers to deliver consigning it to the bottomless pit, got prominent people to answer them—in general, invented the

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kind of public indignation build-up which has been a favorite on Broadway ever since. People flocked to see this naughty show. When they saw it, they saw nothing the modern child couldn't be taken to see, but it was new and daring and Tooker played those elements to a fare-ye-well.

And he did the same thing with Rignold. As soon as the new English star appeared he began to receive the richest, lushest, most outspoken collection of mash notes that ever a young man with a profile found to read. Rignold knew nothing at all about the actual source of the things. It must have fair driven him crazy. But somehow Tooker managed to let the papers get hold of some of the more lurid specimens and overnight Rignold was running Montague neck and neck as the favorite of the feminine public. Tooker followed through by billing his new luminary to play a special matinee of "Romeo and Juliet"—for Tooker's own benefit, by the way—with seven different Juliets, one for each scene, including such illustrious actresses as Adelaide Neilson, Fanny Davenport and Marie Wainwright.

It all worked just a little too well. Mrs. Rignold, peacefully awaiting her husband's return to England, got hold of some of the published correspondence and took the next boat. She arrived in New York, breathing fire and slaughter, demanding an explanation from her innocent husband and threatening to divorce him on account of these outspoken ladies who clogged his mail

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with undying devotion. That cramped Tooker's style. But the tradition was going great guns by that time—and the matinee idol, in the shape of Kyrle Bellew, Maurice Barrymore, Charles R. Thorne and McKee Rankin, was a standard figure from then on.

There's nothing new under the sun. The present system whereby a radio- or movie-star can arrange with an agency to have himself written 50,000 fan-letters in three months—at a price—is just an adaptation of the Commodore's fine Italian method. If Corbett had needed the build-up of phony fan-mail, I'd have cheerfully supplied it. But he didn't. It came of itself.

Still the public took a lot of educating before it would swallow the idea of a champion prize-fighter being a gentleman on the side—or vice versa if you like. The ordinary matinee-idol didn't go in for the down-the-cellar-and-throw-the-key-away stuff—not so you could notice it. The English, being the most conservative race on earth, were particularly tough—we never did get the idea over to them. When we took "Gentleman Jack," Corbett's play, to London, we roused more alarums and excursions than had been seen there since Pocahontas had landed. The English conception of a prize-fighter was, if anything, even lower than the American. At the National Sporting Club in London, the scene of all the important boxing-contests, the fighter himself was the lowest of the low. He could come and see the fun when his colleagues were in the ring, but he and his handlers had to sit in



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a special part of the room—a kind of a barred corral—completely separate from the gentlemen-members who paid the freight. When they asked Corbett to come and see a fight there, he refused unless he could be on the same footing as the members—which was, they said, out of the question. It wasn't until the American press raised a terrific storm of protest over seeing their champion snubbed this way that the Nationals managed to change their minds.

The consequence of this attitude was that London could hardly believe its ears when it was announced that we had taken Drury Lane Theater, the Parthenon of the English drama, for our forthcoming presentation of "Gentleman Jack," starring James J. Corbett, champion of the world. It was about like chartering Westminster Abbey for a dance-hall. Sir Augustus Harris, the grimly dignified producer who had the lease of Drury Lane, was practically startled into swallowing his monocle when I came to him with the proposition. But he was just as broke as he was stiff, and my offer of a thousand pounds brought him round after some backing and filling. The point was that I wanted a huge stage to build a real American boxing-club layout on, and Drury Lane had the biggest stage in London.

Harris didn't have a moment's peace of mind from the time he signed the papers. He had to put up with a lot of spoofing from the press, including a cartoon of himself taking down the bust of Edmund Kean from



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over the door of the Drury Lane and putting a bust of Corbett in its place. All the time we were readying the production he fretted round in the back of the house like an unemployed ghost. I had a crew of carpenters building me a permanent half-funnel of ringside seats against the back- and side-walls of the stage—the bare bricks of the wall for background, and plenty of space in the middle for the ring in the culminating championship fight scene. That allowed us to set the preliminary box-scenes in the ring-space and, for the climax, all we had to do was strike that last box-scene and pull off the fight in the full width and depth of the enormous stage. I had room for a thousand people in that layout, but I hired only sixty professional supers. When Harris saw them spotted meagerly round on the sets, with me rehearsing them in yelling and cheering and fighting, he thought I was off my trolley for sure and certain. Every ten minutes he was asking Arthur Collins, the stage-manager:

“My dear fellow, what in the world is this confounded Yankee trying to do?” And just before the opening his jitters had reached such a point that he ran away to Belgium to wait till the storm of his impending disgrace blew over.

I wanted a spontaneous effect, not an artificial, regimented stage crowd, and I got it by a method which disrupted that whole end of London. The first-row seats were to be occupied by such great sporting figures—all people who had met and taken to Corbett—as

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the Duke of Teck, father of the present Queen Mother, the Earl of Lonsdale, Lord Hay and the old Marquis of Queensberry, who's responsible for the modern boxing code. I figured their presence would do a lot to get us in right with London. To fill the nine hundred-odd places remaining, I flooded the town with tickets stating:

"THE BEARER IS INVITED BY THE MANAGEMENT TO BE AT THE STAGE-DOOR OF DRURY LANE THEATER AT 10 O'CLOCK ANY PERFORMANCE NIGHT TO WITNESS FREE OF CHARGE A GREAT SPARRING EXHIBITION BETWEEN JAMES J. CORBETT, CHAMPION OF THE WORLD, AND PROFESSOR JOHN DONALDSON, THE EMINENT AMERICAN BOXING INSTRUCTOR—FIRST COME FIRST SERVED."

It was the biggest chunk of something for nothing that the English had ever heard of. At eight o'clock of the opening night the stage-doorman came rushing up to Collins:

"I sye, sir," he said, "there's thousands of people out there trying to push the door down, sir. Shall I send for Scotland Yard, sir?"

I said we wouldn't need Scotland Yard. For two solid hours I let them wait and howl. Then I posted Connie MacVeagh and Jim Daly, Corbett's gigantic sparring partners, on either side of the stage-door inside, planted myself in the middle, not without misgivings, and told

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the doorman to open up. They started a rush—a rush that would have mashed me into mince-meat—but MacVeagh and Daly were a match for them and we got them sifted in by twos and threes until the seats on stage were full. Then I reminded the thousands of leftovers that their tickets had said “first come first served” in big black letters, and wished them good night and better luck at the next performance. After contemplating the size and heft of MacVeagh and Daly, they let it go at that and went home. And I rushed on stage to instruct my thousand amateur supers in their duties as a fight crowd.

“This won’t be an exhibition,” I told them. “It’s three-quarters of a real fight. I’m to be referee. Now, when my hand goes up—you yell—yell like blazes. When it goes down—stop.” Just the same system they use nowadays with applause and laughter in broadcasting studios. I already had my sixty professional supers drilled in odd bits of naturalistic business, starting fights, making bets, bobbing up and down. Nobody knew who were the supers and who weren’t, so the crowd was acting as natural as you please. Then I ran through the whole fight for them in dumb show, playing three roles at once—referee, Donaldson, Corbett, all at the same time—I was young then and could get away with things like that—and rehearsed the hand-signals. But I held them in and didn’t let them yell—any stray crowd-noise was covered by the music out front between the acts.

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My re-enactment of the fight was a fine performance, if I do say so myself. By the time I got to the fourth round, they were all bursting with pent-up excitement. Then, when everything was set, with all the sporting peerage of England in the front row, Corbett and Donaldson appeared and started fighting—we raised the curtain, my hand went up and I let 'em yell. Lordy, how they yelled! That curtain came up on a boiling, roaring surge of mad excitement, with the fight at its swirling best in the middle, the finest stage effect I ever got in forty years of trying. The stage knockout at the end of the fourth round was the final touch. Knockout is the word.

It took the London papers off their feet. Corbett woke me up with the early editions—all raves. Clement Scott, dean of London dramatic critics, a man with the prestige of George Bernard Shaw and William Lyon Phelps rolled into one, wrote of that fight scene: "The greatest thing in unison effect yet done pale before this extraordinary bit of life transferred to the stage." He said it beat the mob-work done by Charles Kean's "Richard II" and Salvini's "The Gladiator" and the famous Saxe-Meiningen company which had been in London shortly before. "They are not moved like automata by the wave of a red flag," he went babbling on. "Each man in that vast assembly . . . seems to take on a separate individuality, and to be acting not by rote but by impulse. Whoever stage-managed that prize-fight is certainly a master of his art." I had no objection to

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taking credit for teaching our thousand deadheads to do what they had really done naturally. But presently the story of that mob leaked out—and the laugh was on Scott for mistaking actuality for stage effect. It was fine publicity both ways.

We all thought we'd run a year at Drury Lane. Augustus Harris came to the same conclusion, when the reports reached him in Belgium. He leaped back across the Channel and, at the second night's performance, came poking out on the stage as I was breaking in my mob, nodding approvingly, whispering in my ear and generally working hard to give the effect that I was his trusted assistant, carrying out his own ideas. Corbett got one look at what was going on, took him firmly by the arm and led him off the stage with instructions to stay off from then on.

We didn't run a year. We ran only five weeks with a net loss of £1500. The English public was fight-minded enough. They'd stand round and gape at the man who had licked Charley Mitchell as blatantly as any yokels at an Iowa railroad depot. But they wouldn't pay money to see him in action on the stage. We went touring all over England and Scotland, and the only places we did any business were Liverpool and Glasgow, where American seamen had broken in the inhabitants to American ideas. Even in Birmingham, which was supposed to be the nerve-center of English boxing, we drew only £300 in eight performances.

But we had a little additional bad luck there. Cor-



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bett felt he had to discipline a local tough who had insulted one of the ladies in the cast—it was the Fourth of July and she was wearing a little American flag in the lapel of her coat. And then he got farther into the bad graces of the local citizenry when he disgustingly refused the special entertainment they had provided for him—a trip to a rat-pit, where a champion dog was to kill a thousand rats in a thousand seconds.

In fact, Paris was the only place we made any money. Boxing didn't exist in France in those times. Hitting a man with your fist was the one thing which automatically meant a long sentence in the cooler—discouraging to the manly art. So we were a complete novelty, and when we appeared at the Folies Bergère, with Daly and Corbett sparring in the blazing lights specially installed for Loie Fuller's dances, we cleaned up \$10,000 in ten days. In the customs, on landing, the whole staff of the customs house went into ecstasies over a three-sheet lithograph of Corbett in fighting-togs. "Ah! Le boxeur! Ah, qu'il est beau!" was all you heard for ten minutes.

Nothing would do but Corbett must get into the ring with a French expert in *la savate*—the French foot-boxing in which you could kick a man in the jaw, flopping down on one arm to do it in a sort of an upside down off-to-Buffalo, but you couldn't use your fists. What happened reminded me of nothing more nor less than Daly and the kangaroo in Chicago. The Frenchman flopped and kicked Corbett in the face just

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once, drawing a little blood. Corbett looked startled, faded back, fainted a couple of times, and then laid the kicker cold with a well-calculated right and we all went and had a bottle of champagne.

We were always having a bottle of champagne. Clarence Mackay, then a young fellow enjoying himself in Europe, had been instructed by his father, John W. Mackay, in whose bank Corbett had worked in San Francisco, to show the American champion a good time. He did. He took his responsibilities very seriously indeed. What we didn't see, hear, eat, drink and experience couldn't have been worth seeing, hearing, eating, drinking or experiencing. London was pretty good and Paris was stupendous.

Of course, a lot of it's all buried in a pink haze by now. But the antic I remember most clearly out of that trip was worming my way into the chorus of the Covent Garden Opera Company—also managed by Augustus Harris—when it was summoned to Windsor to give a command performance of Gounod's "Faust" before Queen Victoria. I wanted a look at royalty in its native haunts, and that struck me as a good way to get it. Harris took a lot of persuading, but I finally carried my point and went along.

I could fake singing pretty well and look round at the same time. We played in one end of a big hall in the castle. The Queen and the court were at the other end, the Queen seated in the middle, a solemn old lady in a big chair. The rest of them seemed to enjoy

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it all right. Maybe the Queen did too—when she wasn't fast asleep. It was comical to watch her drooping off, her head falling lower and lower, then coming to with a jerk and a look round to see if anybody else had noticed, sitting up straight for a moment and then drooping all over again—just like any other old lady the world over who can't keep her eyes open. And snoring to boot, when she really got going. No matter how loud my fellow chorus-members sang, I could still hear her sawing away and striking a knot now and again.

We also got a look at the Prince of Wales—later Edward VII—in a characteristic pose, thanks to Charley Mitchell. Mitchell hadn't the least notion of bearing us a grudge for the Jacksonville business. In fact, he worked overtime to be nice to us, since our presence in the pub run by his father-in-law, the famous Pony Moore, meant money in Charley's pocket. We couldn't afford to hang around with him too much, though, for he was a pretty bad actor. One of his playful little habits was socking policemen over the head with his stick just casually as he walked along the street. Usually the bobby would recognize the great fighter and merely touch his hat and say "Thank you, Charley." But he did it once too often. Shortly after we left London he hit a bobby so hard that he fractured his skull and it ended up with Charley serving fourteen months in the treadmill.

Corbett and he and I came up to a theater stage-door one evening after the performance was over.

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Standing in the shadows was an elegant and whiskered gentleman, just a figure in evening cape and silk hat. But Charley recognized him. "Good evening, your 'ighness," he said, "this is Mr. Corbett, the Yankee who licked me in the States." The Prince shook hands with Corbett, but, before we got into anything like a conversation, the stage-door opened, a veiled young lady floated out and took the Prince's arm, and the pair of them melted away into a waiting carriage.

We had figured that, since Corbett was Irish, and the Irish are more fight-conscious than any other nation in the world, Dublin would be a good spot for us. But the Dubliners were also discouraging. They met us at the railroad station 10,000 strong, so intent on taking the horses out of Corbett's carriage and dragging him to the hotel themselves that, by mistake, they unharnessed and dragged the carriage containing MacVeagh and Daly, who looked so big and formidable they figured one of them must be Corbett. And when it came time for the performance at the Queen's Theater the street was crowded with spectators waiting to watch the champion drive by, telling each other that he made thousands of pounds a week out of his theatrical tour. But, since none of them had the slightest intention of going inside the theater we played to twenty pounds.

We had to console ourselves for this fiasco by journeying—at our own expense—to Tuam, a little back-country town, to give a benefit and help them raise

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funds for a new church. The local parish priest was Father John Corbett, Jim's uncle, and the founder of the famous Irish Land League. It was like landing on another planet—I don't suppose Tuam sees one stranger a year even now. We must have been the biggest event in the town's history until the day when Amelia Earhart landed near there and gave them a new thrill. Three-quarters of the population didn't know a word of English—Gaelic was all they talked. We realized how little they knew of anything else when we heard that the week before we got there, a strolling company had done Dion Boucicault's Irish comedy, "The Shaugraun"—with Dan Lewis, an American negro actor playing the lead—and they'd stood for it. But they liked Corbett too. Our one performance took in enough to build a whole church big enough for Tuam. In Parliament shortly after, John Redmond, the great Irish statesman, said this action of the American champion's was one of the finest things he had ever heard of.

Being the manager of both Gentleman Jim and "Gentleman Jack" may have got in my way as a young fellow with Broadway ambitions. But it had its compensations, and not only financially. I lapped up being pointed out everywhere with: "That's Bill Brady, Corbett's handler." One evening in Canton, I remember, Corbett had been upstairs in the hotel having a chat with William McKinley, then governor of Ohio and a candidate for the presidency, and the pair of



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them came down the stairs together to join up with me.

“Hey, Pete,” said an out-of-town drummer next to me, punching his companion in the ribs, “look there on the stairs—that’s Jim Corbett, the champeen.”

“Gosh!” said Pete, and then: “Who’s the little fellow with him?”

I was as proud of that as if it had been me instead of Corbett.





## *Chapter V*

WHEN CORBETT AND I RETURNED TO AMERICA AFTER OUR European junket, the goose was hanging higher still. As I've already indicated with grim details to match, the junket itself was a financial flop. But the American public, whom we had plied with long and judiciously spaced cables about playing the Folies Bergère in Paris and having the horses taken out of Corbett's carriage in Dublin, didn't know the grim details. As Corbett's manager, I struck New York as a conquering hero, besieged by reporters at Quarantine and all the rest of it. Corbett's new play, "A Naval Cadet," a better job than "Gentleman Jack," written by the same man, immediately started the money rolling in again just where it had left off, and Corbett was doing even better as an actor because I'd hired McKee Rankin, a magnificent director, as well as a fine actor, to play the villain in the piece and coach Jim up to a really professional standard.

Between "A Naval Cadet" and the old family war-horse, "After Dark," which I was still playing for all it was worth, I was raking in two or three thousand dol-

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lars clear profit every week, rain or shine. Big money in the nineties and nothing to sneeze at in the nineteen thirties. And the best thing I could think of to do with all this money was use it to renew my frantic efforts to become a top-notch theatrical producer. However snooty the theatrical world might feel about seeing a fight manager elbowing his way into their midst, I figured I would eventually get somewhere if I could just keep on sluicing money over Broadway. When I wasn't buying up failing productions just because they inhabited Broadway theaters, I was investing in new scripts and producing them myself. In other words, I was behaving like a theatrical version of Coal Oil Johnny, making myself a financial godsend to managers with dubious productions on their hands and playing an important role in keeping the national currency circulating.

Stage-struck is probably the word, but not exactly the classic variety of the disease. After all, the theater was an old story to me. A veteran of west coast barnstorming and an eminent producer of Bowery melodramas was hardly the conventional type of amateur angel. It was kudos I wanted for my money—uptown Broadway kudos. Nobody under fifty can hope to comprehend what that meant, how the new play was literally the talk of the town in those days and the mainstay of the papers the morning after, how the actors and actresses were lionized socially. Why, Grover Cleveland's most intimate friends, coming and going

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at the White House more freely than any politicians in the land, were Joseph Jefferson, Stuart Robson, William H. Crane, Lawrence Barrett—actors all. A hostess who landed Edwin Booth for a dinner party was as set up as if she'd married off her daughter to the Prince of Wales. Something like that situation exists in certain European capitals even now, but it's been dead in America these forty years and more.

It was already on the way out when I started buying my way into the picture, although nobody knew it yet. I was part of the younger generation of producers, along with Belasco and Charles and Dan Frohman, who supplanted the Golden Age of the seventies and eighties. But that isn't quite fair. It wasn't we youngsters as individuals who did the fatal damage. That was the work of the famous theatrical syndicate, formed during this period, which kept a stranglehold on the American theater clear up to the World War and eventually fixed it so the strictly commercial manager, the strictly commercial play and the strictly commercial actor dominated the stage. People lamenting the well-known "decline of the American theater" give you every reason for it, from the introduction of co-educational drinking to the periodic recurrence of sun-spots. As one who saw the syndicate rise and fall and fought it every step of the way, I can tell you that its injection of big business into the theatrical game had more to do with the decline of the American theater than any other ten things you can mention.



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Its beginnings were queerly casual, way back when Joseph R. Grismer, the man who taught me the theater business, was playing in the Baldwin Theater stock company in San Francisco. The Hayman brothers, Al and Alf, later king-pins in the syndicate set-up, were manager and treasurer of the Baldwin respectively. At the same time Dan and Charles Frohman hit town with Callender's minstrels, a troupe which, for a novelty, carried real negroes instead of black-face white men—Dan managing the outfit, Charles going ahead of the show as advance man and occasionally beating the bass drum outside the theater to bring in business. I can see him yet, whaling away at the thing, red-faced, puffing and worried. Neither outfit was doing well, so Dan Frohman suggested a combination of forces, using the negro troupe for background in the plantation and steamboat stuff of a production of that old stand-by, "The Octoroon." That put the Haymans and Frohmans in the same boat. When the Haymans came east and hooked up with Klaw and Erlanger, then just inconspicuous New York booking agents, the fatal combination was all set. Steadily, cold-bloodedly, they reached out and reached out until within ten years or so they had every big theater in every big town either sewed up tight or scared to death.

It was a neat and versatile layout. The Frohmans were the highbrow, swanky side of the picture, an invaluable front of well-deserved prestige, producing pretentious drama for one market while the other end

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of the outfit went in for whipped cream and spun sugar musical shows for another market. The Haymans and Klaw and Erlanger were the cold-blooded works behind the front, contrasting sharply with the Frohmans' genuine love of the theater and ability to make plays worth while.

It was easy to see what would happen. The same thing was happening at the same time in steel and oil. But steel and oil are straight business. The theater is flesh and blood, too. The syndicate's raids on talent had more than anything else to do with the breaking up of the grand old tradition of all-star stock companies established by Augustin Daly and A. M. Palmer. In time, out of sheer dog-in-the-mangeriness, the syndicate was forcing no less an immortal than Sarah Bernhardt to troupe the United States under canvas in a circus tent, because their high mightinesses wouldn't allow her in a theater. They made Mrs. Fiske play school-houses and lodge-halls, as if her company had been a fly-by-night troupe with only six rags of scenery and too broke to pay its way to the next stand. That was their style. The effects still last. When the American theater does come back—as it will—hard times will have finally purged it of the syndicate's legacy of crass commercialism.

I fought and got away with it. Belasco started out by playing ball with the syndicate in New York and did fine for a while. But then they turned him loose and it looked like curtains for a while. He lacked my

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advantage of having slathers of money rolling in every week—and, if the syndicate thumbed you down, you needed the whole U. S. Treasury to fight back with. I remember coming down Broadway one cold winter night during this period and seeing Belasco parked in a doorway to get out of the wind, hat pulled down, threadbare overcoat up round his nose—an uncomfortably obvious picture of a man down on his luck with nowhere to go and not so much as one hope to sharpen on another. I said “Hello, Dave,” and passed on, stifling my impulse to slip him twenty dollars because I knew there wasn’t a chance in the world he’d take it. Presently, however, he acquired Mrs. Leslie Carter, got some backing on the strength of her prospects, and snaked himself out of the swamp in spite of the syndicate. After her tremendous triumph in “The Heart of Maryland,” he went right on up to become the greatest producer of his time.

My own first production on my own hook—in a Broadway theater, which was the only point in it—was a play called “The New South,” for which I brought Grismer and his wife, Phoebe Davis, in from the coast. James A. Herne was also in the cast to strengthen it, and the Grismers had brought with them from the coast a youth named Holbrook Blinn who had a two-line walk-on at twenty-five a week. The only profit I ever derived from “The New South” was my first lesson in what not to do about dramatic critics. All of them, Nym Crinkle, Willie Winter, Alan Dale, Acton

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Davies, slammed it galley west in their variously pompous or nasty styles. To a man fresh from the rough and tumble methods of the prize-ring, that kind of treatment meant fight. I took big ads in the papers quoting the worst reviews—an embarrassment of riches—and daring the public to come and see for themselves what a raw deal a splendid play had got—money back if not satisfied. But nobody bothered to take advantage of what I still think was a highly sporting offer. The theater was costing me \$3000 a week and it was a good night when we took in over a hundred at the box-office. But I kept “The New South” running till the loss was over \$30,000 just to make sure the critics realized what I thought of them.

But I didn’t even get that satisfaction for my money. They paid no attention whatever. This business of critic-baiting is one of the surest signs of a tenderfoot theatrical producer. Some never do get over it, and we’ve recently had the spectacle of United States congressmen swatting newspaper reviewers over the head with a stuffed club as a way of getting into the headlines. Everybody does it when he starts. I learned my lesson after some ten years of trying to sweep back the sea, which is a pretty good record for the event. For there’s really no more point in hollering about bad notices than there is in firing a shotgun at a Kansas tornado.

Among the plays I bought during this period of playing the theater like a roulette wheel was a contri-

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bution to dramatic art by Maurice Barrymore, father of all the Barrymores in general. I'd got to know him well through his close friendship with Corbett—that arose out of Barrymore's being a fine amateur boxer as well as a brilliant actor. His one rival at boxing in the Lambs Club was a fellow named Robert Hilliard. The pair of them finally got so bitter over the question of who was the better man that they fought it out to a savage finish one night in front of the Park Theater in Boston with Barrymore the winner by several miles. He was good—he really could stand up and spar with Corbett and come off very prettily so long as Jim remembered not to put on too much pressure.

One evening when the three of us were loafing round, Barrymore dragged me up to his room to read me a play he'd written which was a sure-fire winner. It was called "Roaring Dick and Company" and Barrymore read it in a fashion that threatened to tear down the lighting fixtures and rip up the boards in the floor—a performance that got me mesmerized in no time. During the third act he cried so hard that you could hardly hear the words—great big, fat tears. Well, thought I, if just reading it through makes this veteran actor blubber like this, what will it do to an audience?—a line of reasoning which prompted me to buy it on the spot and get it into production immediately.

The night we opened, a fellow in the lobby asked me what terms I'd made with Barrymore.



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"The usual five, seven and a half and ten," I said.

"I suppose he's made his own deal with Besant?"

"Besant?" said I. "Who's Besant?"

"Walter Besant," replied the fellow, "the man who wrote the novel he took it from."

"Novel?" said I, "I didn't hear anything about a novel."

"Well," said the fellow, "you will." The next day he sent me a copy of a book by Walter Besant called "Ready Money Mortoboy," which was just "Roaring Dick and Company" between covers. The play was a failure anyway, so there wasn't any kick from the other side of the water, but Barrymore never did succeed in explaining to anybody's satisfaction how he managed to hit not only the same plot but all the details too, down to the size of the heroine's feet.

Nobody can play roulette forever without hitting a winning number now and again. I saw the Boston opening of A. M. Palmer's production of "Trilby," Du Maurier's famous novel, took the midnight train and walked into Palmer's office the next day with a proposition:

"You've got a freak attraction there," I said. "Something that will clean up quick or not at all. I want the road rights, leaving the six key cities for yourself. How much?" I knew the old gentleman was pretty near bankruptcy and ready money would go a long way with him.

He coughed, looked down, and pulled his whiskers.



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"That will cost you some money, young man," he said. "Something like \$20,000 in advance"—cough—"on twenty percent of the gross."

Such terms as that were unheard of then or now. But I had all the cash in the world, so I wrote him out a check and walked out, leaving him gaping at it and obviously wondering if any check that size could possibly be good. In no time I had six road companies taking Svengali and his beautiful stooge all over the smaller places in the United States. Palmer's big city company coined money, but the spots I played didn't cotton at all to Svengali's hypnotic wiles and, for a while, it looked as if I'd sold myself a pup again. But the string I had on Palmer's further exploitation of "Trilby" saved the day. When he wanted to take his company to San Francisco, he had to play a route all the way from St. Louis west to get there—and I owned the rights every step of the way. He had to cut me a large slice of pie to get me to bow out in his favor. And then, when I discovered that "Trilby" was not copyrighted in England and the colonies, the old gentleman had to give me fifty percent of the gross in Australia to keep me from taking my own company out there, playing Svengali myself. First and last I got some \$50,000 out of my \$20,000 investment.

Threatening to play Svengali myself was no bluff. I'd already been doing it, since I was still a good trouper in emergencies. Shortly after they went on tour, one of my road companies wired me from North Adams,

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Mass., that Lawrence Hanley, its Svengali, was in a mess and couldn't go on—what to do? I hopped a train and found that Hanley was definitely out of the running, leaving the company and worried about the \$200 he owed me in advance on salary.

“Never mind the money,” I said, “I'll settle for your wig and whiskers.” Then I humped myself back to New York on a midnight train to get a wardrobe—Hanley was double my size and his version of Svengali's shabby frock coat fitted me like a night shirt. All the way to New York and all the way back to Poughkeepsie, the next stand, I was studying up the part. Without years of training as a hair-trigger utility man in barnstorming companies, I never could have got up in it in time. While waiting for a change of trains at a God-forsaken junction at two in the morning, I was hammering away at it, walking up and down the platform, script in hand, working by the light leaking through the station-agent's office window, tearing my hair, making hypnotic passes at the baggage truck and spouting: “It is the morgue. Be careful, my Trilby, you come not back to sleep on one of those marble slabs. . . .”

Presently the station-agent came popping his head round the corner to see what all the excitement was. When he went away again, apparently in some alarm, I was much too busy to pay any attention. I came to out of the fog of Svengali's sinister personality only when a policeman arrived to arrest me as a dangerous lunatic. But, in spite of the law and lack of time, I

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threw a Svengali in Poughkeepsie that still cheers me to think of. It's a fine, fat part and the chief reason why "Trilby" has been movieized more than probably any other story in the world.

I still get some cream out of it even now. A little later I sank \$1500 buying the rights to the acting script when Paul Potter, its author, needed cash. His script is the only actable play ever made out of the book's scanty material so, every time they make another movie out of the old campaigner, they have to settle with me.

No, I didn't always get stuck in these experimental days. I got cash as well as satisfaction out of paying off Charles Frohman for a fast one he pulled on me once when I needed help—nothing really out of the way, you understand, just a matter of Frohman's forgetting an informal promise at an inconvenient moment—but enough to make me lay for him. My chance came when a one-act play called "The Cat and the Cherub" turned up on the variety bill at Hammerstein's Olympia with Holbrook Blinn in the leading role. It was a nice little thing, the first piece ever to use the business of propping a dead man up against a wall so naturally that the cop walks by swinging his club without noticing anything wrong. That gag has since been developed in all kinds of directions, including the Apache dance-hall business where the murderer fools the law by dancing with the girl's corpse.

A couple of weeks after "The Cat and the Cherub"





JAMES J. CORBETT, WILLIAM A. BRADY, CHARLEY WHITE  
*at Carson City, Nev., where Corbett was training to meet  
 "Bob" Fitzsimmons*



WILLIAM A. BRADY, JAMES J. CORBETT, MILLIE JAMES  
*A row during the rehearsal of "The Naval Cadet," 1897  
 when Corbett was Champion of The World*



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came to town, Frohman and Belasco—this was before Belasco broke with the syndicate—opened a play called “The First Born,” using the same corpse-against-the-wall notion. It was a better play and had prior claim on the idea. They announced that they would immediately send a “First Born” company to London. I thought fast and worked quick. Without announcing anything I bought “The Cat and the Cherub” and loaded it, actors, scenery and all, on a boat sailing four days before Frohman’s company was to leave. It opened in London as a curtain raiser on the Saturday evening before “The First Born” was to open on Monday. The corpse made it an instantaneous smash success, while “The First Born” fell flat as a pancake because the ground had been cut from under it. Inside a week Frohman’s company was sailing back home while “The Cat and the Cherub” stayed on for months, paying me £150 regularly every week—and incidentally making Blinn so conspicuous on the London stage that his subsequent brilliant career can be said to have started then and there.

But I hadn’t had to wait for news from London to begin to consider the venture worth while. That came only a few hours after the boat sailed, when rumors that “The Cat and the Cherub” was on its way to London brought Belasco into my office, tearing his hair and whooping about how I couldn’t do that—I mustn’t do that—why in God’s name had I done it? I let him rave as long as he wanted and then had them take him



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away, indicating that I thought Frohman could probably figure out why I'd done it. After all, I was young then, and given to pointless antics of kinds other than critic-baiting.

The theatrical syndicate wasn't the only sign of changing times in the amusement world. Nobody was exactly taking the movies seriously, but they had just barely come into existence and were feeling round for commercial possibilities. It was still the period of the Edison Mutoscope—a device you can still find in less progressive shooting-galleries consisting of a slot-machine with the customer turning a crank to make an illuminated roll of separate action photographs flicker past his eyes. The early Mutoscope called for plenty of violent action to cover up the flicker—and prize-fighting meant action—so presently the Kineograph Company, Edison's outfit, was approaching Corbett and me to do a fight for them—six one-minute rounds.

So here we were, out at the Edison Laboratory near Llewellyn Park, N. J., pioneering in the movie business. To stand up with Corbett they'd hired a large tenth-rater named Peter Courtney, supposed to be champion of New Jersey or something. Corbett could have flattened him in ten seconds fast asleep, but, with careful rehearsal, he could be made to look like a fighter—and we rehearsed as religiously as the chorus of a Gilbert and Sullivan opera. Edison ran that end of it himself. He didn't know much about fighting and still less about dramatic effects, but I was thoroughly

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impressed by the way this straight scientist, absolutely inexperienced in such things, knew his way around by sheer instinct in staging this phony battle. That quiet little coot, sitting there with his hands folded and his mouth pursed up, had the fundamentals of movie technique worked out on his own hook twenty years before Hollywood was anything more than a sandlot suburb: "Keep your face to the camera, Jim . . . Back him round so your face is to the camera . . . And now this round, remember you come in from the side . . . Hold up that right hand punch till you get him out in the middle . . . We don't want your back—give us Courtney's back . . ." And by the same token, the good movie tradition of taking forever to get anything done also got its start with this job. We were two solid days getting a picture of those six minutes of fighting.

That six minutes of fight recorded on limber little cards went all over the world. The Klondike and Australia and Capetown and Suez put coins in slots to see this lively record of what happened when Jim Corbett was asked to carry along a plausible-looking but clumsy fighter in the scrub-pine back country of New Jersey. The Kineograph Company made pots of money out of it, which began to sell me on the idea of movies—and besides, it intrigued my imagination to think of what you could probably do with the things. It fitted very neatly, because it was prize-fight films that brought in the first real money the movies ever knew.

I guess that's my lead into the Fitzsimmons fight.

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There's enough low comedy scattered through it to keep it from being too melancholy to talk about.

By this time Bob Fitzsimmons's relentless campaign to force Corbett into a fight had reached a point where there was no longer any possibility of saying no. Corbett's funny feeling about Fitz had grown stronger every day since he'd won the title. I repeat it wasn't fear in any ordinary sense—just a loony, illogical repugnance to the idea of getting into the ring with him. Fitz was a dangerous man, there's no denying it, but not dangerous enough for anybody of Corbett's speed to be scared of.

We tried to stall him off and keep the public diverted from our own procrastination by making Fitz fight a new Australian heavyweight named Steve O'Donnell whom we were more or less sponsoring. We matched O'Donnell against the aging Jake Kilrain with the idea of building him up to where Fitzsimmons would have to fight him to justify a match with Corbett. A good idea, but Kilrain spoiled it by licking the tar out of O'Donnell. The old fellow was shaky and feeble, but he knew a lot about fighting still, and, what's more, he had John L. Sullivan in his corner, abusing and bullyragging O'Donnell all through the fight. With more experience O'Donnell could have taken the ragging and gone on to win, but, being green, he lost his head and the fight. There was a good deal of excuse—Sullivan was a savage performer with his tongue and had put his heart in his work. He got so heated up that later in the eve-

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ning, when he met O'Donnell, Corbett and me in a hotel lobby, he started the tongue-lashing all over again. I had to get between them and tell Sullivan to shut up, with appropriate verbal embroidery.

That wasn't as risky as it sounds, perhaps. Although Sullivan was down and out, he could still have knocked me across the lobby with one tap, no doubt. But then, as now, fighters are afraid of out-of-the-ring brawls with non-professionals. In plenty of cases fighters have been killed in such fracas and the killers have been acquitted—and in any case courts and public would be whole-heartedly against the professional bruiser who had beaten up a civilian.

Why, when I met Fitzsimmons and Martin Julian, his manager, to sign articles for the Corbett fight, Fitz started abusing Corbett and I had to tell him that, if he didn't pipe down and tend to business, I'd make him jump out of the window. Corbett had refused to attend the meeting at all—that was the way he felt about Fitz. I left the place ahead of them—it was the office of the old New York *Herald* at 35th and Broadway—but I wasn't going to let that look like running away. So I hung round the door on the sidewalk and waited for them—made both Fitz and Julian walk out and look me in the eye as they passed up a chance to do something about our little conversation upstairs.

We were in a grudge-fight and no mistake this time. The grudge-fight is one of the oldest gags in boxing—as badly overworked as “Hello, Ma, I'm all right and

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I'll be right home," over the ringside microphone. But there was no fictional ballyhoo about the way Gentleman Jim and Ruby Robert felt about each other. Half in dread, half in contempt, Corbett was ragingly eager to show this antipodean what-is-it that he had bitten off more than he could chew. And, as a result of years of this business, I think Fitz was even worse. When the two men accidentally met on the road while training for the fight in Carson, it was Corbett who offered to shake hands and Fitz who refused: "I'll shake hands with you in the ring, but nowhere else," he said.

It was the public that had forced us into this fight. It seemed as if the whole world were insisting that Corbett stop play-acting and give Fitz a chance at the title. But, when we did sign articles, it looked as if there wasn't a state in the union that would let us stage the fight. We weren't going to try Florida again in our right minds. Louisiana had recently repealed the law, permitting boxing, which had been passed specially for the Sullivan fight. And nasty business involving fake matches and men killed in the ring had soured all the other likely spots. For a while the only offer we got was a bid from the Klondike—Dawson City. They guaranteed \$100,000, but after all there were limits to where we would go.

The jam broke only when Dan Stuart of Texas, a side-partner of Colonel Bradley of Palm Beach and Kentucky Derby fame, persuaded us that he could fix it so we could hold the fight in Texas. That sounded



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all right, and his offer of a \$40,000 purse, with an extra \$5000 for training expenses, was satisfactory, so both fighters headed for Texas and started training. But we hadn't been there a week when the governor, a man named Culberson, told us politely that we were in the wrong pew. He hated to spoil any arrangements we might have made, but there were going to be no prize-fights in the sovereign State of Texas.

We replied, as we had in Florida on a similar occasion, that, since Texas had no anti-boxing law, we didn't see what was going to stop us from fighting. That led to a long and complicated newspaper controversy about it, and I must admit that Stuart put up some brilliant arguments on our side. But all that accomplished was to back the governor into a corner—and, when properly cornered, he got out by calling a special session of the legislature, which cost the state some thousands of dollars, to have an anti-boxing statute passed to order. In a way it was flattering to have a special session called just to keep two men from taking a poke at one another. But it was also unhandy when you had lots of potential money tied up in the thing.

Stuart's next move was to persuade Hot Springs, Arkansas, that a heavyweight championship fight would attract a lot of money to the place. Arkansas also lacked an anti-boxing law, but by this time we knew that needn't prove so much—the moral backing of Hot Springs would probably prove a lot more. Corbett and I moved over there immediately. Fitzsimmons and com-



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pany stayed in Texas. I didn't like the look of that for two good reasons. For one thing, I suspected Fitz had been getting cold feet and was probably only too willing to stall and possibly get the match broken off. For the other, both Stuart and Fitzsimmons had been feeling unhappy about the terms of the agreement, which gave me and Corbett all revenues from the movies that were to be taken of the fight as a bonus for condescending to sign. As the Corbett-Courtney film was already demonstrating, there was a lot of gravy in pictures, and their only chance of getting in for a cut was to get the present agreement abrogated.

Arkansas also was infested with governor-trouble. With great promptness Governor Clark announced that there would be no fight in Arkansas. Hot Springs, rallying to our defense, threatened to raise a force of vigilantes to surround the town and keep out the militia if the governor tried to stop the proceedings. The center of this scheme was the sheriff of Hot Springs, a formidable citizen named Reb Houpt, who had killed sixteen men in and out of office. He sounded like a useful ally, but he didn't remain an ally long. The governor sent for him and told him that he would either co-operate in stopping the fight or get thrown out of office. Houpt, who was childishly proud of being sheriff and wearing a tin star, immediately knuckled under and promised to fetch Corbett to Little Rock, the capital, inside a week.

That pretty well settled our hash and at that point

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Fitzsimmons showed where he stood by crossing the Arkansas border at Texarkana and voluntarily giving himself up to the law. He might well have been afraid of actually getting into the ring with Corbett. Jim was in the pink of condition, as fine as I ever saw him, and the chances are all that, if the fight had come off as scheduled, Fitz would never have been champion of the world.

When we arrived in Little Rock, we found Fitz already there in charge of another specimen of local killer named Jesse Hurd—the only man in Arkansas who had more notches on his gun than our Mr. Houpt. Take it all round, it was a touchy situation, and called for counting ten before you so much as dared brush your teeth. But I got too mad for discretion when Hurd threw a member of our party into jail for merely making an injudicious crack about the state's attitude toward boxing. I got on the telephone and made some pretty strong remarks about Hurd in the process of reminding the governor that he'd promised all of us protection if we'd come to Little Rock peaceably. Evidently the governor used my protest to bawl Hurd out with and quoted some of my remarks. When I was down at breakfast the next morning, Hurd appeared, his hand in his coat pocket, and a look on his face that soured every pitcher of cream in the dining-room.

He walked over to where Fitz was sitting and asked him to point out this fellow Brady. Fitz obliged very cheerfully. As Hurd came over to my table, I could see

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his fingers working on some large object in his pocket. The only sensible thing I could think of to do was to put both my own hands on the table palms up.

"Your name Brady?" he asked.

I said yes. He looked down at my empty hands and then round the room. Everybody else had his eyes fixed piously on his plate. There was a distinct lull in the conversation. If I'd so much as twitched an ear, Hurd would certainly have plugged me and claimed self-defense after the immemorial custom of bad-tempered sheriffs, but I sat still as a wax-works. I was a big name in the papers in those days and right in the middle of a widely publicized row and he didn't dare shoot unprovoked and risk the investigation that would certainly follow.

"Grwamph!" he said, way down in his chest, and then walked away. It was curious to hear the way conversation picked up again and knives and forks began to clink against the plates as soon as his back was out of sight. As for me, I was still breathing a little short by noon, when we were due at the governor's office to be told where to get off.

Haupt escorted Corbett and me over to encounter the majesty of the State of Arkansas. We were ushered into a highly unpretentious room in a bungalow kind of building where Hurd, Fitzsimmons, Julian and the governor were already expecting us. We snubbed Fitz and looked at the governor instead—he was well worth looking at. Any time he wanted to start he could have

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made a good living playing old Southern colonels of the mint julep school—long and lean and white-haired and soft spoken as the gurgle of Bourbon out of a jug. The tenor of his remarks was in dramatic contrast to the mellifluity of his speech. He produced a long black cigar, stuck it in his face to complete the picture, chewed it for a moment in silence, and then let us have it.

“Gennelmen,” he said, ‘I’ll lay my cahds on the table. I don’t intend to follow the example of my brotheh goveneh in Texas and put the State of Ahkansaw to the expense of a special seesion of the legislatyuh to outlaw boxing within ouah bawduhs. I have a simple method in mind. Mr. Fitzsimmons,” he said, letting his eye rest casually on Fitz’s red head, “Ah’ve placed you in chahge of ouah estimable citizen, Mr. Jesse Huhd. And you, Mr. Corbett”—shifting to contemplate Jim—“have been placed in chahge of ouah equally estimable citizen, Mr. Reb Houpt. As you may know, gennelmen, Mr. Huhd has killed seventeen men, Mr. Houpt sixteen. You can undehstand that Mr. Houpt would like to catch up with Mr. Huhd and Mr. Huhd is anxious to keep well ahead of Mr. Houpt. Heah and now I instruct both these officehs that the fust one of you two who so much as bats an eye at the otheh man is to leave Ahkansaw in a pine box with a hole in him. Huhd, do you undehstand?”

“Yep,” said Hurd.

“Do you, Houpt?”

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"Yep."

"Good mawnin', gennelmen," said the governor, and we were ushered out. Well, you'd have thought the plague had broken out in Hot Springs. I never saw a crowd kick up so much dust to get out of town as both camps of fighters and their followers. We even took the precaution of going to the railroad station through side streets.

That ruined the fight. We declared the agreement off ourselves, considerably to the relief of both fighters, and went back to the theater hoping that the public would give us credit for having made a good try to give them a run for their money and failed through no fault of our own. But this Arkansas mess had got a lot of publicity and that had served only to sharpen the public appetite for the fight. By hook or crook we had to come through or Corbett's highly valuable prestige, which was coining us money in the theater, would suffer. Once again we started the weary, worrisome business of angling for a location. It wasn't till after eight months of finagling that Stuart managed to persuade a good-natured German who was governor of Nevada that he ought to invite us officially to come and have it out at Carson City.

I didn't like the layout worth a cent, but, with the sporting world yowling its head off, there was nothing to do but agree. Any way you looked at it, it was bad medicine. We'd had Corbett in fine shape and right up to fighting edge. Now he'd slacked off again with-



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out having a chance to fight. That was bad psychology under any circumstances and particularly unfortunate in view of the jittery way he felt about Fitzsimmons. And that wasn't the only way we missed the boat this trip. The new agreement put the whole promotion in Stuart's hands, movie rights and all, leaving only fifty percent of all profits to be split half to Fitz and half to Corbett. In other words, the new deal left us without a face card in our hand.

But we had to play the round out, so we trekked to Carson City and set up training quarters. As soon as we got there, Corbett began to show signs of a dismaying change. Day by day he grew crankier and jumpier and harder to handle. It wasn't only me he had stumped—it was just as bad for Billy Delaney, the third member of the triumvirate that had trained Corbett since before the Sullivan fight. The only person who could do anything with Corbett was Judge Lawler, an old friend of his from the Olympic Club in San Francisco, who had turned up in camp to renew the friendship. The Judge meant well, but he knew very little about boxing, nothing at all compared with a professional trainer like Delaney, and it was only luck when his suggestions made any sense at all. Corbett had already lost his fight two weeks before he ever stepped into the ring. The psychological load he was carrying was bad enough without adding the handicap of inadequate training.

In my eagerness to keep Jim in fine mental fettle,

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I'd accidentally added another ton or so to the psychological load. Ever since our first exhibition tour, Corbett's mascot had been a mutt collie named Ned who had picked Corbett up in Boston, taken a terrific shine to him and refused to leave him. Jim wasn't as superstitious as some fighters, but Ned, who had been part of the picture surrounding both the Sullivan and Mitchell fights, was a symbol of luck to him. Besides, Jim loved him for his devotion and his bravery—that dog would fight anything on two or four legs and kill or get killed. When we went to Europe, we left Ned behind with John W. Norton, the St. Louis actor-manager. As I went west to join Jim at Carson City, I picked Ned up and took him along as a surprise.

I didn't know, you see, that Harry Corbett, Jim's brother, had already bought Jim a beautiful thoroughbred collie and installed him at the Carson City camp. The new dog was a fine specimen, bright and affectionate, and Jim was crazy about him. When Ned and I arrived unannounced at the training quarters, we found Corbett sitting with the new dog in his lap. Ned didn't even stop to say hello to Corbett. He left the ground in a savage spring and had the new dog half throttled by the time Corbett and I could tear them apart. Obviously, there was going to be murder if the two were allowed together, so Ned was relegated to the kitchen while the new dog went to sleep at the foot of Corbett's bed—Ned's traditional post—in the cottage across the road.

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I don't know how it happened. We thought we locked the kitchen up tight. Anyway, it was still winter in Carson City, several inches of snow on the ground, the temperature well below freezing—and the next morning we found Ned frozen to death with his chin on the doorstep of Corbett's cottage. That was a fine omen to start training on. You can imagine how it affected Jim just when brooding was the worst thing in the world for him. It was a good ten days before he began to come out of the gloomy fit he was thrown into.

But we trained on as well as Jim's new brand of temperament permitted. About the only real workouts he got were when he was in the ring with a new sparring partner named James J. Jeffries, a rugged youngster whom we'd imported from San Francisco to make Corbett work hard. The affair couldn't be stopped now. The big arena, where the fight was to take place, was nearing completion. When the great day came, there wasn't a soul in our camp who didn't feel way down in his boots that the end of the world was right round the corner. Nobody would have admitted it to himself, Corbett least of all—but he wasn't in shape and, however they might have stacked up with each at his peak, we all knew Bob Fitzsimmons was nothing to fool with.

We were the glummost of parties when we reached the arena. But there was a certain amount of humor available, furnished largely by ex-Senator John J. Ingalls of Kansas and Mrs. Fitzsimmons. The senator

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was there because the Hearst papers had hired him to report the fight from the intellectual angle, whatever that was supposed to be. The racket of hiring eminent names to write special stories was already started then, with even less attention paid to the pertinence of the name to the event covered. So here was the senator, a very famous man in his day, parked in a ringside box, silk hat, frock coat, carnation in the lapel, stiff as a poker and solemn as an undertaker, trying to make sense out of a spectacle as foreign to his sober-minded world as a voodoo ceremony in the Haitian bush.

Just to make sure he wouldn't make any sense out of it at all, some inspired functionary had planted him in the same box with Mrs. Fitzsimmons. She had been Rose Julian, sister of Fitz's manager, and worked with her brother in a variety turn, tumbling and acrobatics, in the cheap cellar theaters that studded old San Francisco. In her stage days she'd been handsome as a debutante Brunhilde and some three times as husky—it was Rose who tossed her brother round and carried him on her shoulders and did the strong-arm end of the act in general. After she married Bob and went out of training, she'd put a lot more weight on a frame that had hardly been sylphlike in the beginning, and now she was by all odds the most conspicuous object in sight—with the possible exception of the rough booth they'd put up to contain the movie cameras. When Mrs. Fitz got in the corner behind Bob's chair just be-





FLORENZ ZIEGFELD

WHITE STUDIO



ANNA HELD





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fore the fight began, she obscured the view like a middle western thunderhead.

The senator looked a trifle put out when, as the proceedings began, this beauteous and overstuffed Amazon climbed in and sat down beside him. When she began to root—and she began with the bell and never stopped till the last of the ten counts that lost Corbett his title—the senator huddled away into a far corner of the box as if he'd been put in the same cage with a lunatic elephant. But there was no getting away from her as she jumped up and down and waved her arms and pounded the rail. She had a voice like one of these new-fangled hooters on ocean liners:

“Work on him, Bob!” she hollered. “Bust him in the slats! . . . Blast him through the ropes! . . . He's yellow, Bob, he's yellow! . . . Make him stand up and fight, darling! . . . The belly, Bob, the belly! Right in the old breadbasket!” and so forth and so on, with the senator so flabbergasted by this couple of hundred-weight of screeching female that he couldn't look at the fight at all—and the spectators all over the arena roaring with laughter and cheering Mrs. Fitz on almost as much as they cheered the fighters.

When Fitz went down in the sixth, the lady almost broke a blood vessel and you could have heard her in Sacramento. After every round she'd hurl herself out of the box and go lean over the ropes behind Fitz's chair—the first time anybody had ever seen a woman

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in the ring—throw her arms round him and kiss him and sponge off his face with her own fair hands. Then she'd go back with the bell and give the senator another fit of heebie-jeebies. If they'd taken a movie of that box during the fight they'd have had the first and best comic short ever made.

I'd rather not go on from there. It's not only that the Carson City fight has been described again and again. It's even more that the recollection of how it felt to see Corbett struggling on in a sort of parody of his former brilliance with all the marrow gone out of his bones is something I don't like to think of yet. He was a beautiful fighter, even at his worst. The first six rounds were all his way—jab and feint and stay away and cut your man down to size—the old formula, but the zip was lacking, even when, in the sixth, he landed clean and laid Fitz on the floor. Fitz was cool enough to take the full nine seconds to come back in, and managed so well the rest of the round that Corbett wore himself out trying to finish him off. It was that last minute or so of the sixth that told me the whole story. From then on the best I could do was borrow a quart bottle of whisky from the man next to me—the first time in my life I ever appreciated the taste of straight whisky—and consume it in frantic gulps with no more effect than if it had been so much soda-pop.

And I needed the effect the worst way when Fitz landed the famous solar-plexus punch with all the power of his Herculean torso that looked so queer

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balanced on his skinny little legs, and Corbett, jerking like a man shot in the back, stood almost erect for a moment and then collapsed like a suit of old clothes. I'd been afraid of defeat, but now that it had come, I didn't believe it. I couldn't believe that Gentleman Jim, the only heavyweight I ever saw who was a perfect balance of skill and courage and strength, had actually been counted out. And, if it was bad for me, think what it was for Corbett. The knockout hadn't put him out—just paralyzed him temporarily—and, after the bell, he got up and, mad with rage, tried to go on fighting the winner. After we got him back to his room, I know he was contemplating suicide for a while.

Take it all round, it was just as bad a mess as I had feared at the beginning. Our twenty-five percent of the admission profits didn't do any more than pay training expenses. The moving-picture of the fight, the first movie ever to get really big money, took in three-quarters of a million. But by the time Stuart got through with it, our quarter of the profits was tantalizingly small, compared with what we would have got if the governor of Arkansas hadn't been such a tough specimen. Corbett went west, bent on retirement. I went east, as sick as a dog.

Bob Fitzsimmons had knocked out Gentleman Jim Corbett in broad daylight. As Corbett's manager, I'd been within fifteen feet of them when it happened and there were several thousand witnesses to check it by.

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But, as I've said, I couldn't believe my own eyes and, for some time after the fight, I was doing my best to remedy this lunatic situation, which had cocked Fitz up on the champion's throne and put Corbett to nursing a broken heart in retirement in California. The moment the fight was over, I'd leaped into the ring and made a wild speech about how Corbett had a right to go on because he hadn't really been knocked out. That didn't get me anywhere. Neither did any of my subsequent efforts. But I was in there trying for a long time just the same.

As soon as I got back east I made the unwelcome discovery that Stuart, the promoter of the Carson City fight, had got a complete stranglehold on the movies that had been taken. We all knew that this first full-length picture of a major boxing contest was going to coin money. That was why Corbett and I had fought so hard to keep its earnings for ourselves, only to have to turn it over to Stuart and accept a quarter of the profits. Now Stuart had incorporated the project and made himself president, with everybody else getting the runaround. When I walked into his office and said I wanted to see him, I was told I'd have to wait—the president of the corporation was in conference. In order to get some satisfaction out of him I had to turn a first-rate lawyer loose and have him forced to put the stock in escrow. And the net result was a considerable shrinkage in our cut. That taught me a lesson. It took a Texas gambler like Stuart to impress it on me,



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but I've never forgotten it. Never be a minority stockholder in one of these personal corporations put together to promote something or protect somebody. And, which is even more important, always get yourself elected treasurer.

It occurred to me, however, that, even if the money end of the movie was going to run out on us, the movie itself would still be a convenient way of educating the public into the belief that Corbett had been juggled out of the fight. So, when the picture opened at the Academy of Music in New York—a tremendously important sporting event, of course, attended by all the big sporting figures in town—it was Bill Brady who gave the accompanying descriptive lecture from the stage. I wasn't doing it just for the love of showing myself in public. The fellow who ran the projection-machine was a Corbett fan, so I didn't even have to bribe him to help me put on my act. Movies were new then and you could get away with monkey-business that wouldn't go now, because nobody knew anything about how they worked. Besides, the modern clockwork electrical projector is difficult to tamper with. But this was one of the early hand-cranked machines and we could slow down the film at will without anybody's being the wiser.

This was the way it worked. After the fifth round I had the film stopped and went into my dance:

"Now, ladies and gentlemen," I said, "here is where I shall prove to you that James J. Corbett is by rights

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still champion of the world. I want you to see this with your own eyes instead of taking my word for it. This is the round where Corbett knocked Fitzsimmons down. As he goes down, the referee will begin to count. I'll count too, watch in hand. I want you all to count with me. Fitz will get up as the referee counts nine—presumably nine seconds, ladies and gentlemen—but, if you check with your own watches, you'll see it was a lot longer than that."

Then my confederate in the projection-booth started the film again—Fitz went down—the film was slowed—and it was a full thirteen seconds on the screen, with me dramatically counting off each second, before he got up again.

"You see, ladies and gentlemen," I shouted triumphantly, "there's absolute proof! Thirteen seconds—a clean knockout for Corbett!" At that point a huge figure reared up in the audience beneath me and roared:

"Brady, you're a liar!"

I looked close in the gloom and made out that it was the late William Muldoon, the famous Solid Man, who had been timekeeper at the Carson City fight. There was no denying that I was a liar. Fitz put up such a kick about my oration that I was never again allowed to repeat the performance. But it didn't matter. The newspapers picked up the argument, as I knew they would, and there was a long and violent controversy in print about this question of a long count. Sounds

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familiar, doesn't it? Liar or not, I'd succeeded in raising an issue in the public mind which only a return match could really settle.

The public wanted to believe that Corbett hadn't been licked. The first thing that struck me on coming east was that the old rule of the defeated champion's being more popular than ever and the new champion's nose being out of joint was working better than ever. It took Fitz years to work up anything like popularity—no reproach to him, but he just wasn't colorful, except in the ring. That's been a handicap for a lot of champions, such as Jim Braddock. It looked like a set-up for a return match. I jumped back to California and cajoled Corbett out of his retirement, bringing him back to give boxing exhibitions in competition with Fitz in Denver and Kansas City. The results proved my point all over again. Playing day and date with Fitz, Corbett won in a walk, drawing twice as much money every crack.

There was every reason to believe that all this would work on Fitz's nerves till he'd fight Corbett again to get the public off his neck. But it didn't turn out according to logic. Nobody was going to get Bob Fitzsimmons back into the ring with Jim Corbett. I don't mean he was afraid—Fitz had plenty of courage—but he'd been pursuing Corbett for years, ever since the Sullivan fight, and, now he'd finally got the title away from him, he was going to keep it safely wrapped in cotton wool on the top shelf of the closet, so far as

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Corbett was concerned. We went after him with every dodge known to the fight game. Corbett actually pulled his nose one night in Green's Hotel in Philadelphia. But even that didn't get us anywhere. It was two years before Fitz stepped into a ring again to defend his title. On that occasion I supplied both the man who beat him and the diplomatic wiles that trapped him into making the match. But the sad part of it was that it wasn't Jim Corbett who turned the trick.

So Corbett and I turned to baseball, as the possibility of a return match gradually faded out. There was baseball in the Corbett family—Jim's brother Joe once pitched the old Baltimore Orioles to a championship—and Jim himself was a slick performer on the diamond. After all, a lightning quick eye and perfect co-ordination are the essence of a good ball-player and he had those qualities to burn. His hitting left a good deal to be desired, but he was a whiz on defense—put him on first base and he looked like big league stuff. Nobody could ever accuse Jim Corbett of not being versatile—I've seen him turn his hand to fighting, acting, lecturing, ball-playing, movie-acting, vaudeville-trouping, after-dinner speaking, health-doctoring and infielding, and there were no flies on him in any of those departments.

We started with the Paterson, N. J., club of the old Atlantic League—an outfit which included Ed Barrow as manager and Hans Wagner, coming up from the

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minors on his way to Pittsburgh and fame, as short-stop. We got a percentage, and a big one, of all we drew over the average take, and it was a swell speculation all round. When Jim Corbett was playing first, the park was jammed till the turnstiles got hot-boxes. And Jim gave them a fine show, holding down first with practically errorless ball. To make sure he got on all right at bat, we'd slip the pitcher a little something for himself to groove a couple at the right moment—there wasn't any Judge Landis then and that sort of thing was all in the cards and nobody thought twice about it.

It was front-page stuff, this sudden blossoming out of a popular champion fighter into a real baseball player, and the papers played it that way. Barrow was so tickled with the results that he booked us to tour the whole Atlantic circuit, and we turned 'em away everywhere. It was the sweetest graft Jim and I ever struck—anywhere from \$500 to \$1200 every afternoon we showed, and in the summertime too when our theatrical career was laid away in moth-balls. We became the chief attraction at the Iowa State Fair, playing to 15,000 people a day. But our greatest moment on the diamond was the way Jim came through in the pinch when he was playing first base for Milwaukee.

That was carrying out a contract entered into with the Milwaukee club a month in advance. By the time the date agreed on came round, Milwaukee, which had been putting on a Garrison's finish, was playing



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a crucial game for the pennant with Minneapolis, and the last thing the Milwaukee club wanted was an amateur first baseman horning into the picture. They tried to cancel—we fought—fought so hard that they finally gave in and Jim took over for the afternoon. He'd been playing day in and day out without the sign of an error, so we really weren't doing them as much damage as they thought. As the game went on and he held his end up brilliantly, picking them out of the air and out of the dirt and off to the side, Milwaukee began to understand what a bargain they'd got. And then I'm blessed if he didn't step up to the plate at an extremely crucial moment—no fixing the pitcher this time—and slash a double into left field as cool and neat as Ty Cobb in his best days.

That was the wind-up of our mutual career, however. As Fitz got farther and farther out of reach, Corbett and I did begin to drift apart. I was losing interest in pugilism and he was bent on setting himself up a fancy big saloon on Broadway near 34th Street. I didn't think much of that idea, although for a while I was to have a quarter-interest in the place. Defeated champions always set up in the saloon-business and Corbett, who was entirely different from other titleholders, had no business doing the usual thing in any direction. Besides, he wasn't the type to stand round all day and all night and shake the hands of barflies who'd come down there just to meet him and brag about it afterwards. John L. could do that, but it wasn't Cor-

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bett's style—and he got sick of it soon enough, as I knew beforehand he would. It wasn't his idea—it was George Consadine's, as a matter of fact—the same Consadine who afterwards ran the big Metropole Bar at 42nd Street and Broadway. Consadine's influence with Corbett was evidently on the up-beat and mine was on the way out—so, regretfully, as it always is when you part with a man whom you've taken all the way to the top, I cashed in my checks and bowed out.

Jim and I'd done business for ten years without so much as the scratch of a pen between us, so there was no friction about settling our mutual interests. I gave him my quarter of the projected saloon and he gave me his quarter of the production of "Way Down East," which was very much on my mind just then. A fair bargain at the time, but a bad bargain for him in the end. The net profits from "Way Down East" went to well over a million and his share would have been a very pretty piece of change.

But then, "Way Down East" was the most dramatic example of a theatrical ugly duckling that I ever ran into. In number of performances and total returns it was right up in the same class with "The Old Homestead" and "Ben Hur." "Abie's Irish Rose" isn't in it with comparisons on either count. For twenty-one enduring years "Way Down East" was a lively piece of theatrical property and it's still a fine thing to own—D. W. Griffith paid \$175,000 for the silent picture rights and just recently there was \$50,000 more com-

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ing out of the talking picture rights for the version recently released.

It was sort of sneaked over on me to begin with. There was a booking-agent in my office named Harry Parker, and his wife, Lottie Blair Parker, was always writing plays. Several times, at Harry's request, I'd read a script of hers and had to return it with polite regrets. Parker developed the idea that I was prejudiced against his wife's work. He waited a long while and then turned up again one day with a new script which he wished I'd look over and tell him what I thought of it. There was no author's name—I asked who wrote it.

"Oh, never mind now," he said, "tell you later."

At the end of the first act of this script, which was entitled "Annie Laurie," I was definitely interested. At the end of the fourth I began to figure it was something well worth while. At that particular moment the theatrical world was looking high and low for a play that could follow up the smashing success of "The Old Homestead" in what was known as the "by-gosh" drama. This was that play. There would be a lot of work to be done before its theatrical virtues were adequately brought out, but the fundamental stuff was there—straight, uncompromising heart-throbs with hayseed in its hair. I sent for Parker to find out who wrote the thing.

"My wife wrote it," he said, stuttering with joy. "You don't mean you like it?"

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"That's just what I mean," I said. Then I made him a proposition. I explained at length that alterations on a considerable scale would be necessary and the process of experimenting with it would be long and costly. So I offered royalties up to \$10,000 for permission to change the title and juggle with it until it was theatrically satisfactory.

Mrs. Parker was more than willing. And I knew just the man for the fixing-job. Joseph R. Grismer, the brilliant actor-manager who had taught me the show-business out in California, was the finest play-doctor who ever made a spavined manuscript jump through hoops and roll over and play dead. I showed him "Annie Laurie" and he caught fire at once.

But it was a long two years before this play, retitled "Way Down East," began to sit up and smile at us. Some hits arrive overnight; you have to quarry others out of a mountain of successive failures and disappointments. "The Old Homestead" itself, which was made out of Denman Thompson's vaudeville one-acter called "Joshua Whitcomb," had a similar history of lagging disappointment and then of glorious triumph following a decision to throw in a lot of fancy effects and a lot of spare characters to make a big show of it. During the trial-and-error period at one time or another we had used every small town in the United States as dog for "Way Down East," and no two of them ever saw the same version. Mrs. Parker worked like a Trojan on the script when we were readying it

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for the New York opening. Grismer lived, slept and ate it. He certainly earned that credit-line which always ran in the program: "Elaborated by Joseph R. Grismer." Why, the mechanical snowstorm used in the third act, which had no small part in making the play a memorable success, was specially invented by him for the production and then patented. One of his inspirations was laying hands on a vaudeville actor named Harry Seamon, who had a small-time hick act, breaking his routine into three parts and running him into "Way Down East." Old-timers will remember his first entrance: "Big doin's in town—pust-office bruk into and robbed last night—gret loss fer th' guv'mint—three dollars wuth o' stamps stole!" And that was just one detail in the readying process.

When we got up courage to bring the thing into New York—at the Manhattan Theater—it still looked anything but encouraging. Nevertheless, we ran it seven months, without a single profitable week, in order to be able to advertise a long New York run when we took it out on the road again. As soon as we got out of New York, our battling began to bear some fruit. The first time we'd played St. Louis, we drew \$1900 in a week—the second time we got \$13,000—which should demonstrate what had happened in the meantime. Our next seven months in New York, at the old Academy of Music, averaged \$10,000 a week. If you know show-business you know that, once a thing gets started in that style—remember this was back



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when admission scales were much lower—it doesn't stop till it gets close to seven figures' profit. Grismer's third share ran into \$360,000 eventually, and he earned every cent of it. "Way Down East" was a perennial run lots of places, an annual institution like the Christmas pantomimes in England. Cleveland never went for it, nor Kansas City nor Toledo. But in Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York, Boston, Chicago and the one-night-stand country all over she was a little daisy for ten, fifteen, twenty years.

We could hardly have kept "Way Down East" at the Manhattan Theater so long if I hadn't held the lease of the place along with Florenz Ziegfeld, who liked the looks of the play enough to come in on the theater. Ziegfeld and I made a logical pair of partners, both being youngsters willing to take a chance on anything that looked like box-office money. And there were lions in his past too—with Sandow, the famous strong man, fighting them. The tale of how Sandow took the pucker out of the lion in San Francisco under Ziegfeld's management was one of Flo's favorite stories.

It wasn't my kind of lion—this was a five-hundred pound beast which had chewed up its trainer just the week before Sandow was scheduled to fight it. In order to make it a fair trial between brute strength and human strength, they muffled the lion's claws with heavy mittens and put his jaws in a wire muzzle—no clawing or biting, just Sandow giving away three hun-

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dred pounds in weight in a combination wrestling and slugging match. Sandow was afraid that these devices would frighten the lion and cow him, so he asked to try it out in a rehearsal. He needn't have worried. The mittens and mask had made the lion fighting mad and, when Sandow entered the cage, he sprang at the man. Sandow dodged, got one arm round the cat's throat and one round his middle, lifted him in the air and slung him down—hard. The lion picked himself up and rushed Sandow—came in slugging like a mean fighter. Sandow ducked his paw and hugged him breathless. The third time Sandow purposely let the beast jump on his back and then slung him forward in a kind of flying mare.

It must have looked great and Ziegfeld thought he had a swell attraction. Just before the performance the lion was still feeling tough enough to snap short a three-inch post when they tried to rope him to it in order to get the mittens on him. Everybody ran but Sandow when the post broke. Sandow picked up the busted post and slammed the lion across the nose with it and dragged him into his cage. By the time they got the big cat into the tent, he'd had enough. Sandow had to goad him into springing and in two minutes' slamming round he'd got him so softened up that he was carrying the lion round on his shoulders like a sack of potatoes. In other words, no show at all. Ziegfeld never got done calling himself a fool for not making the rehearsal into the real show.

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A real showman he was—it was that dash of P. T. Barnum that put the kick into his theatrical accomplishments. Nobody else could have put across that all-time classic of publicity stunts, Anna Held's milk-bath—the little French star up to her chin in milk in a Pittsburgh hotel and all the reporters in town standing pop-eyed in the bathroom door. And as much of a genius on color and detail in musical shows as David Belasco was in the legitimate. It was a treat to watch Ziegfeld studying out a new production, with samples of materials spread out in front of him and costume-designs, light-plots, scripts and actors' pictures all over the room—raw material that would be whittled into an integrated whole by the time rehearsals started. And a great gambler, as most big theatrical figures are. On one occasion I saw him win \$200,000 at a sitting in a French casino and then move on to the next place and lose it all in another sitting without batting an eyelash.

Not much sense of humor, however. But he did know talent and could pick comics and leave the laughs up to them. Speaking of Ziegfeld and comics reminds me of the letter I got from Will Rogers some time back when I was thinking of putting on a Will Rogers radio show and had asked him to tell me about himself. As a vest-pocket biography I've never seen the beat of that letter—*Who's Who* would be a lot better reading if they'd only hired Will Rogers as their rewrite man:

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"Dear W. A.:

Lord, I don't know what to tell you about myself. Why didn't you ask me about some politician?

Here is all I can remember. In the spring of 1905 at Madison Square Garden during the Horse Show, Col. Zack Mulhall brought on a few of us to put on a show. I was the roper. I stayed on as I had this stage idea and first appeared about May first at Union Square using a horse and a man rider in the act, went on to Hammerstein's Roof and stayed all summer. So you see I am one cat that broke in at the biggest theater and then worked down. The talk came in accidentally and I got mad when they first laughed at me and quit making the announcement for a week or so.

Went to Europe in 1906, Palace in London, and Winter Garden in Berlin.

Blanche Ring in 'The Wall Street Girl' was first musical show, opened the night the *Titanic* went down. Ziegfeld Roof in 1914 in the first midnight show, stayed there 67 weeks, then on the road with 'Follies' for five years straight, and Roof while 'Follies' was rehearsing, so was never off one night in five years. First name ever featured with 'Follies,' as they billed them all alike, but this was in the '22 show, pictures 1919 and 1920. Then back with 'Follies' for four years, then back with pictures, and the whole thing has been a lot of luck. I never did know what it was all about, just stumbled from one little success to another, generally through awkwardness. You were lovely and thoughtful of my daughter and you will always have a friend in Mrs. Rogers, Mary and I.

Happy New Year and all years to you and yours.

Will Rogers."

I was present at the Sixty Club the New Year's Eve that Ziegfeld first met Billie Burke—brushed his shoulder on the dance-floor as he was dancing with her—and heartily believe the story that he proposed to her that same night. Just to even things up Ziegfeld had an indirect part in my first meeting with Grace George,

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whom I was to marry three years after the death of my first wife, Alice Brady's mother. One of the curses of being a theatrical producer is, of course, the way your acquaintances are always dragging round inexperienced youngsters who want to go on the stage. I don't think a day has passed in my last forty years that somebody—all the way from presidents of the United States to doormen in theaters I once played—hasn't phoned or written or dropped in to tell me how much this bright girl or nice boy would appreciate my giving him or her a chance. The girl or boy then turns up, scorns my meek suggestion of a possible walk-on in a road company, and lets me know that Hamlet or Juliet is their idea of a proper way to begin.

This looked like just such another occasion, but it wasn't. The visitor was Honest John Kelly—baseball umpire, referee of the Corbett-Mitchell fight, by this time a big-time gambler and all-round sport. He brought along a young girl for whom he wanted me to do something and left her in the outer office while he came inside to give me the works. I cocked my eye at him and grinned suspiciously.

"Nothing like that, Bill," he said. "This is a straight proposition. Daughter of an old friend of mine—I just want to see her get a break somewhere."

I looked out through the plate-glass window into the outer office and saw an amazingly pretty girl smiling straight at me—a smile that immediately assuaged my resentment over being bothered again about the daugh-



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ter of somebody's old friend. I knew Ziegfeld was in desperate need of an ingénue for a play called "The Turtle," and this fair-haired, blue-eyed little creature was just the type. I hardly bothered to ask Kelly if she'd ever been anywhere near a theater. As a matter of fact, she had had some barnstorming experience—but I just shot her over to Ziegfeld regardless and, evidently agreeing with me, he engaged her at once at \$35 a week. Thirty-five per and dress yourself, mind you. Dressing yourself for a Ziegfeld production was no joke by the time he got through specifying materials and design and dressmaker. Besides that dismaying expense, her father had to borrow \$200 to pay commission to a casting agent—for doing nothing at all—before she could go on and play the part.

It was a fine day's work for me. Four months after "The Turtle" opened, its inexperienced but thoroughly charming ingénue became Mrs. William A. Brady. Inside a couple of years she was a star in her own right. And I mean in her own right.

Between getting married and losing Corbett and working farther into the legitimate theater, I was out of the fight game for a while. My wife felt—and on the whole it was a very sound point of view, as I already knew from experience—that the more chance the theatrical world had to forget that I'd first come to national fame as a fight manager, the better off I was. But it was difficult to wean me altogether. By that time boxing was flourishing right in my own backyard. In

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1896 the Horton Law had legalized boxing—twenty-five rounds to a decision—in New York State. It was the Republicans who put it over in the legislature, but the local politicians in New York City weren't going to miss an opening like that. In no time at all politics had its customary stranglehold on metropolitan boxing. The new fight clubs drew thousands every time they opened their doors and the fighters and their handlers, as well as the politicians, were, for the first time, rolling in cash derived directly from fighting. Nothing like modern money, of course—all the time I managed the Coney Island Athletic Club I never saw a \$100,000 gate—but plenty tempting.

And, when the theater business struck a bad slump just before the Spanish War, I was a set-up for that kind of temptation. Not that I was near bankruptcy, but you don't have to be bankrupt to feel mighty uncomfortable. And here was a potential source of revenue right under my hand, a highly profitable new deal in a game I already knew backwards.

I was always wandering up to the Broadway Athletic Club and the Maspeth Club out on Long Island, looking over the new fighters and letting the smoky atmosphere and the yells of the mob and the sound of leather on ribs and jawbones take me back to the great days of Corbett and John L. and Charley Mitchell. When Jim Jeffries was announced to appear for the first time in the east at the Lenox Athletic Club, I was there with eyes wide open. I remembered Jeffries from back when

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he'd come to Carson City to spar with Corbett. Even then Billy Delaney, Corbett's trainer, and I had figured him as a comer. Anybody who could stand up to Corbett the way he did was good, whether Corbett was in shape or not. Since then Delaney had been working on him out in California and the boy I saw that night was coming right along—he had strength and youth and a wonderful left, real courage and the massive stamina of a big Newfoundland dog.

That evening he was supposed to go ten rounds apiece with two men—Steve O'Donnell, and Bob Armstrong, the negro. He won a decision over Armstrong on schedule, but broke his hand doing it. The crowd booed him for a quitter when he couldn't go on. But I followed into his dressing-room and asked for a look at the injured hand. They cut off his glove and there it was, swelled up like an orange, badly cracked. No fake about that.

"Well, Jeff," I said, "what are you going to do now?"

"I'm going back to California," he answered morosely. "The hell with this New York." And go he did, in spite of my efforts to persuade him to stay and give us another trial. But he stuck in my head, as tempting ideas will, for there was no doubt he had stuff. A while later my wife and I were having dinner at Shanley's and I was feeling blue and she was trying to cheer me up. Finally, I said:

"Look here, dear, if I knew where there was a man

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who could beat Fitzsimmons for the heavyweight title, there'd be a lot of money in it."

My wife said she thought there probably would be.

"Well," I said, "I'd like to make some money for a change."

She smiled and told me to go ahead, if I thought it was a good thing. So I started the machinery moving. Getting Fitz to fight was going to take some doing, but I thought I saw a chance of sneaking the match up on him.

My first move in this game of champion-stalking was miles away from the direct attack. I pulled strings and made propositions and got assurances and laid hold of the Coney Island Athletic Club, a huge barn of a place that would hold ten or twelve thousand people. Among my associates in this enterprise were a couple of fellows who stood in well with Fitzsimmons. That was part of the scheme. There was also a Brooklyn politician named Alexander Brown in the crowd and he turned out useful right away. The fight racket, as well as a good many other even less reputable rackets, was then dominated by the influence of Big Tim and Little Tim Sullivan in New York City. Strictly speaking, Brooklyn, which contained our layout, was outside their bailiwick, but we were treading on their toes even so—and treading on Big Tim was ticklish business. The Coney Island Club was going to be by all odds the biggest thing in the metropolitan area and, since they

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didn't yet allow fights in Madison Square Garden, it was obvious that, with the crowds we could seat and the money we could pay, we'd have a monopoly on the best fights from the start.

The results of our audacity began to show up immediately. When we applied for our license, we weren't refused flat out—the police commission, a four-headed anomaly where it was impossible to fix responsibility, just kept on failing to act on our application. All the while we were paying rent on an enormous building. Every time we tried to do something about this dead stymie, the boys put the screws on a round tighter and nothing kept right on happening. I even heard on good authority that the boys had already figured it out among themselves who would take our lease over when we were licked.

At that point I went to see Alexander Brown and he started seeing red. He took me over to have it out with Hugh McLoughlin, the Democratic boss of Brooklyn, reminding him that we'd never have gone into the thing at all without his assurance that our license would be forthcoming.

"Listen, boys," said McLoughlin, hammering the table. "They'll grant that license next meeting or there'll be a split in the Democratic Party in New York State."

When McLoughlin put his foot down, something went scrunch. We got our license. Immediately I wired Jeffries, who was hunting in the California mountains,



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to come east and I'd make him champion in a year. And then I got to work on Fitzsimmons.

Being in business with some of Fitz's friends gave me a private pipeline to his inmost thoughts which I could work to a fare-ye-well without seeming to. On the quiet I let these friends of his know that this Jeffries I was bringing east was just a counterfeit who would look good enough to land a heavyweight bout for the Coney Island Club—but not dangerous. After that had had time to soak in, I tackled Julian, Fitz's manager, with an ordinary straight proposition. He listened. Then he argued and argued and Fitz backed and filled and changed his mind every other day. But I knew the poison was working and that all the while the pair of them was getting extremely reassuring word from private sources that, while the fight wasn't in the bag or anything like that, Jeffries was just a likely looking pushover. Fitz had never seen Jeff in his life, and it was just as well. When we got round to terms I meekly had to give him sixty-five percent of the fighters' end of the gate, win, lose or draw, just to keep it sounding logical. "After all," said Fitz indulgently, "this fellow's only coming on to get licked and make a little money. He ought to be satisfied with a few thousand."

We kept Jeff thoroughly under wraps until just before the fight. Then, however, I put him through an act—carefully rehearsed beforehand—which was intended to let Fitz know at the psychological moment just what he was up against. I will say Jeff put up a

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good performance for an amateur, too. The two men's dressing-rooms were right opposite on the same corridor. I got Julian into a loud argument in the corridor on how the clinches were to be managed, in the course of which Fitz came out and stuck in his oar, as I knew he would. After we'd yelled at each other a while, I said we'd settle it in front of Jeffries and hustled the pair of them into Jeff's dressing-room, where he was stretched out on the rubbing-table—a huge, long-armed, heavy-muscle but supple giant, with a regular doormat of hair on his chest. That was the first time Fitz had laid eyes on him stripped for action and it must have been quite a jolt. It was like expecting a house-cat and then finding it was a mountain-lion you were expected to play with.

But it wasn't a patch on the jolt Fitz got presently. Jeff lay and listened a while, then chipped in, and then, all of a sudden: "Show you what I mean," he said, leaped up, threw me aside, clinched with Fitz and broke away with tremendous violence, hurling the Australian—he was only a middleweight on the scales, remember—clear into a far corner of the room with no more effort than if he'd been a stuffed dummy. I've always thought Fitz lost his fight then and there. You could see it in his eye as he walked out. If it wasn't there, it was the moment in the sixth round when he landed his famous solar-plexus punch, the one that had stopped Corbett, with all he had behind it—and Jeff

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didn't even grunt, just walked back to his corner at the end of the round as cheerful as he'd come out of it.

Financially the fight was a huge success. We took in \$70,000 and we'd have done a lot better if it hadn't rained buckets that night and bogged down our railroad connections. That was New York's first championship bout and excitement ran high. They were betting huge sums at three and four to one on Fitz. As I passed through the audience just before the fight, Jesse Lewi-son asked me my private opinion and looked grave when I said Fitz was booked for a licking. Afterwards I found that, on the strength of my word alone, he'd hedged out \$20,000 that he'd bet on Fitz—one of the few heavy bettors who didn't take a terrific beating. Ruby Robert never had a chance, in spite of the wise guys and their big bankrolls.

I suppose I should have been all steamed up over getting Fitz knocked loose from the title he'd taken away from my friend Corbett. But I found it rather a flavorless victory—just another business deal that had worked out according to plan. I missed the color and flash that had made Corbett a stage-favorite as well as a ring-favorite. So did the public. We did put Jeff into a play called "The Man from the West," and he wasn't half as bad an actor as most fighters. But the public was apathetic—there was nothing like the business Corbett had done in "Gentleman Jack" and "A Naval Cadet."

Still, there was a certain amount of private satisfaction for me in having the company of "The Man

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from the West" photographed. There was a famous photograph back then, something you saw everywhere, of the great Augustin Daly reading a play to his brilliant stock company—Daly very solemn in the middle with the manuscript and John Drew, Ada Rehan, James Lewis, Mrs. Gilbert, Edith Kingdon—who married George Gould—and the rest reverently listening. Well, I was still sore at Daly for the licking he'd given me in our thirteen-year feud over "After Dark," so I had this "Man from the West" photograph taken just the same way—Jeff reading in the middle and the company standing round in the same attitudes and even the background and props exactly the same. The result was a parody that both outraged and tickled the theatrical public and got us a lot of publicity both ways.

Jeff's English tour was no more successful than Corbett's. But Jeff more or less enjoyed himself—every time the English public snubbed him, he'd take his revenge on the hapless English boxers who had to get into the ring with him.

"How much in the house tonight, Bill?" he'd say.

"About forty pounds"—which, on our financial arrangement, meant a profit of rather less than nothing flat.

"Yeah?" he'd say, licking his lips. "Well, see if you can't dig up a couple more of these limeys to lay out." He left a trail of battered and sorrowing pugs the length and breadth of the British Isles. When he wanted to put a man away in a hurry, he was a fast worker. I

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remember that once in Detroit they rang in a really dangerous man on him in a meet-all-comers show. The bell rang, Jeff walked out, shook hands, squared off and stiffened the guy with one punch. You hear a lot about one-punch knockouts, but they're really rarer than hens' teeth.

Jeff's fight with Sharkey at the Coney Island place was memorable not only for its own sake, but also because it was recorded in the movies in the first film ever taken under artificial light. The story of how the lights were so hot they burned both men bald-headed is well known. It isn't so well known that the cameras broke down in the middle of the last round and the end of the fight had to be taken over again some time later. Jeff was willing to run through it once more and so was Sharkey—but with a difference. Tom Sharkey was the gamest little man since Charley Mitchell. He'd fought the latter half of the mill with two broken ribs that nobody knew anything about till he was out of the ring—a savage ordeal with a fighter as punishing as Jeffries. And now Tom said sure he'd fight the man again, but he'd be damned if he'd reproduce that last round. Now he'd had a little rest, he'd like nothing better than three minutes more with Jeff, but, once they were in the ring, he'd fight all he knew regardless of what the movie-men wanted him to do. It took all the diplomacy I could muster to get him to see reason, and I still don't think he'd have consented to play up to Jeff if it hadn't been for those busted ribs. I saw in



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the paper the other day that a print of that film is still in existence in a New York film-museum—well, if the last round fits the other twenty-four, it wasn't Tom Sharkey's idea of how to behave. Of course, it's not impossible that he was trying to take a leaf out of my book and use the movies to prove something damaging to his opponent.

Later that same year Jim Corbett came to me and begged me to fix him up a fight with Jeffries.

"I know I haven't got a chance, Bill," he said. "I'm out of shape and I've been out of the ring too long. But I need the money and that's the truth. We'll draw a big house and the loser's end is good enough for me."

Well, I knew he needed the money and the rest of it was just common sense, so I believed him. That was how I was really innocent of what did begin to look like a deception of Jeffries. Without my knowing anything about it, Corbett had been working out in a gymnasium at Lakewood, N. J., for six months, licking himself into incredibly fine shape for a man halfway through his thirties. After he set up his training-camp, rumors about his splendid condition began to circulate in the sporting world and in consequence our camp was full of uneasy suspicions. To make the situation worse, Jeffries had been taking sparring lessons from Tommy Ryan, the middleweight, who was almost as smooth a performer as Corbett in his best days—and Jeff and Ryan between them got the idea that Jeff was going to outspar Corbett, beat him at his own game.

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Years afterward Jeff did do just that when he met Corbett in San Francisco. But Corbett was even older then—and it struck me on this occasion that trying to outspar Gentleman Jim, on the basis of a few months of instruction, was about as silly as trying to outsing a nightingale after six months of voice-lessons. I argued my head off without getting anywhere. When I saw Corbett in the ring at Coney Island, looking as slim and fast and nippy as ever, my heart sank. Rumors that the fight was fixed—a nice thing to have to cope with—had permeated the whole sporting world and we drew hardly \$35,000. I did my best to show it was on the level by conspicuously making ringside bets right up into the tenth round, till I had \$3500 of my own up on my man. But it was a mess any way you looked at it.

I sat and suffered while Jeff tried to outspar Corbett for twenty-two rounds, the same kind of bad judgment Sullivan had shown at Chantilly when he tried to outspeed Mitchell. Corbett danced round Jeff in the grand old style, punching him where and when he wished—in the tenth he got clean home on Jeff's jaw and shook him clear to his heels. Jeff's face was rapidly turning into raw beefsteak, cut to ribbons by Corbett's slashing left. Then I started arguing and pleading with him to stop this fancy business and wade in naturally. Ryan, who was Jeff's second, was sassing me back all the time. Presently it went so far that he ordered me out of the corner. So I went and got Inspector Billy

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McLaughlin, a police-official I knew, to come and stand beside me, and bided my time.

Corbett's age began to tell after the sixteenth. He was tiring rapidly and, as the thing went on, beautifully as he stayed away, you could see he could hardly hold up his hands. But Jeff wasn't getting anywhere, either. I got word from a confidential and thoroughly reliable source on the other side of the ring that, if the fight went the full twenty-five rounds, the referee would call it a draw or even a decision for Corbett.

At the end of the twenty-second, only three rounds to go, I jumped back into the corner to do or die. Ryan got up on his hind legs again and told me to get out and stay out. I beckoned McLaughlin over and told Ryan to dry up or get thrown out of the clubhouse. That quieted him down and I went to work on Jeffries.

"Jeff," I said, "if this thing goes the full route, you're sunk. Don't box him—fight him! You're playing his game—he's stalling you! Drop this foolishness and wade in—shut your eyes and hit him! Hit him anywhere! He's worn out and wide open—go after him!" Finally, he blinked and gave in.

"All right, Bill," he said somewhere down in his chest, put his gloves up to his bleeding face for a moment and got to his feet. Then he turned on the power and waded in. In three minutes more it was all over.

I'd vindicated myself, but it was a bad moment for all of that. I was the first man to get to Corbett and pick him up.

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"Sorry, Jim," I said, "but it's business." I think I'd have felt better about it if Corbett had made a respectable sum out of this public humiliation. But he didn't even have that consolation. His end of the thing was well under \$10,000.

Shortly after that my contract with Jeffries expired and we went our separate ways. Soon after the contract expired, boxing in New York also died with the repeal of the short-lived Horton Law, to be revived only in Jimmy Walker's time. It was the old story. When politics and gambling and boxing get mixed up—and they always do—the boys and the fixers and the fighters taking dives are certain to make the whole game smell in the public nostrils. Presently the papers will start printing a daily warning in big black letters: "DON'T BET ON FIGHTS!" and the handwriting is on the wall.

But, even when my pugilistic days were a long way behind me, I still remembered the big lesson I learned out of the ring, which was useful in the theater and the movies and everything else I got into in the next thirty-five years. And that is: Always go after the champion. Never monkey round with second-raters. Never bother with newcomers who don't give you the feeling that they will go straight to the top. Katharine Cornell and David Warfield were only two results of my playing that principle all the way across the board. And, if you don't know a champion when you see one, show-business is no place for you to begin with.







## *Chapter VI*

THE NEARER THE TURN OF THE CENTURY, THE MORE ODD things I found myself turning my hand to. In a general view prizefighting and the theater have been the strongest flavors in my troubled existence. But, when I was temporarily out of the boxing-game, my natural combination of restlessness and lack of discretion made me stick my finger into all kinds of pies, both in sport and out of it. After all, it was just showmanship in one form or another. It's impossible to draw a hard and fast line between the theater and the arena. The fundamentals of getting people to pay money to see something happen are the same in any field.

In wrestling, for instance. My career in the grunt-and-struggle racket wasn't very lengthy. But it packed a great deal of action into a small period of time because the focus of my wrestling activities was that incredible creature, Yousouf, the Terrible Turk. He was a standing guarantee of trouble and low humor. First and last he must have been responsible for as many riot-calls as the Communist Party. Leave him by himself and he was reasonably inoffensive. Put him in front

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of a crowd and the black eyes and bloody noses began to blossom among them like spots on a fawn-colored vest. I think the trouble must have lain in the child-like simplicity of his temperament, which completely belied his gigantic strength and the luxuriance of his shiny black handle-bar mustaches. As I look back on him now, I find it hard to believe he was real. But then the contemplation of Primo Carnera has recently shown me again that these freaks of nature do occasionally appear.

He was certainly grown up in the physical sense—six foot two, with arms so long that his huge hands, which resembled stems of bananas, hung well below his knees—weight round two hundred and seventy pounds, with a considerable corporation accounting for some forty of the total. When he stood up in the ring and made his muscles ripple like snakes under his skin, you'd have sworn he was a cross between a fairy-tale ogre and a sea-elephant. He was over thirty at the time I managed him and, so far as anybody knew, had never taken the slightest precautions about keeping in shape, but no lack of training had ever dented the power of his thews and sinews.

It was his great strength that had attracted attention to him as a conscript in the Turkish army. The story was that they'd made him a sergeant for pulling a heavy cannon, that teams of horses had been unable to budge, out of the mud—and in due time he'd been sent to Constantinople where he became the Sultan's fa-

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vorite wrestler. Wrestling has always been the most popular sport all over the Near and Far East. Forty years ago, with boxing still somewhat under a cloud, it was a genuinely international sport, very popular in the United States and a regular rage all over the continent of Europe.

I don't get the credit for importing Yousouf to this country. That was the contribution of a Frenchman named Pierre who, having failed himself trying to wrestle in America, had wooed Yousouf into letting him bring him over and manage his career. Naturally, he'd filled the poor devil full of how much money he had to back him with and how important his connections were, and Yousouf had believed it all. When he got to New York, however, he found the Frenchman didn't have a cent. He got no publicity whatever. He was practically kept prisoner in a little furnished room off the Bowery and let out only to wrestle in cheap bouts. And his diet was so scanty that he was almost out of his head. It wasn't the Frenchman's fault that he couldn't do any better by him. Nor could you blame him for being scared to death that somebody would wean his prize away from him. The Turk knew no English and only a few words of French, so keeping him prisoner was comparatively simple.

There's no doubt that Yousouf was one of the world's great wrestlers—he was never pinned to the mat—and it was only a question of time till somebody would get the Frenchman out of the picture and give the big fel-

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low the break he deserved. I happened to be that somebody and the job was done far more ethically than when somebody else stole the Turk from me a little later on. An agent of mine saw the Turk in Washington, where he was sent to wrestle a local negro, and wired me that, whether it was human or not, it was certainly something worth looking up. I jumped to Washington, got a good glimpse of the Turk, and agreed. Armed with an interpreter and my customary brass, I then went to work on Pierre. He had promised the Turk \$25 a week and board and keep. The Turk had seen practically none of his \$25 and been fed starvation rations. My offer was \$1500 a month and good feeding. I made it clear to Pierre that, whereas he could never get anywhere with this golden opportunity, I had the necessary money and experience to make it go right. I also softened my remarks by giving him a considerable chunk of cash to bow out. Money listened well to the Frenchman at that point—it had cost him his last cent to get the Turk to Washington.

It wasn't only the Turk's looks that sold me. It was also his performance against the negro, a tough customer from Baltimore who had recently cleaned up eight cops single-handed. Yousouf had him on the floor in a few minutes. The negro was scared green and started fouling. At first the Turk looked puzzled and then outraged. Finally, he settled things by picking the negro up and heaving him bodily out of the ring into the empty orchestra pit. The negro lit running and

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was out of the theater and halfway to the Capitol, picking up speed all the time, when the cops arrested him for indecent exposure. That started the first riot I ever saw in connection with Yousouf. It took a good hour for the house to get cleared—and for me to stop laughing. As soon as I got my breath back, I called a forecandle council in the Turk's dressing-room and made my deal as aforesaid.

Yousouf saw money changing hands and me and the Frenchman shaking hands to bind the bargain, but he didn't seem to understand that he'd been sold down the river. The first portent of a change in his circumstances that leaked through the fog and into his brain came when I marched the party out to a big restaurant—with a crowd following, of course—crowds always followed him on the street for the same reason that they'd follow a three-headed horse—and set him up to the first square meal he'd had since the Frenchman had taken him in charge. That meal was something to see. He ate that restaurant as clean as if he'd been a flock of locusts, about six full dinners at once, and then he got up from his chair and came over and threw his arms round me and tried to kiss me, right there in public. Public or private, I was going to have none of that, and I was always having to fight him off to keep him from kissing me out of sheer gratitude. From then on he'd do absolutely anything I told him to.

That came in very handy. The Frenchman had had a bad time with him. In fact, he'd been able to manage



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only by working on the Turk's inordinate fear of policemen, who seemed to symbolize all his terror of this barbarous America. So the Frenchman had hired a fellow to dress up in a stage policeman's uniform, with lots of brass buttons, to give the Turk the works whenever he got out of hand. I had to resort to that gag only once—the time in Cincinnati when the Turk refused to go into the ring because he said he felt sick. I got a cop to come into the dressing-room and threaten him with a nightstick a couple of times and he knuckled under. After his own fashion, that is. He did go into the ring, but all he did in it was to throw his man down and lie on him for almost two hours without moving himself or letting the other fellow move—until midnight when, according to law, the show had to stop.

I've handled lions, prizefighters, actors, prima donnas, cakewalkers, mimic wars and miniature battle-ships, but I never met anything as out of drawing as this gigantic Mussulman. He always insisted on being paid in gold—French gold—and kept it in a money-belt round his waist. He kept that belt on even in the ring. The extra weight came in very handy in his favorite stunt of lying on his man to weaken him before finishing him off. The only time he took it off was when one of his opponents found out about it and threatened to cancel the match unless the Turk came into the ring without it. And he couldn't have spent more than five dollars a month out of his pay. According to our agree-

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ment I stood him his living expenses. Besides board and lodging, oil for his mustache, which was the pride of his heart, and shaving soap was all he needed. He did shave, you see. But he never bathed. Literally never. He wouldn't even let anybody give him an alcohol rub.

I've never seen his equal as a publicity gag when he was properly handled. When I brought him back to New York from Washington, I started building him up with as much care as if he'd been a presidential candidate. To replace his ragged clothes I took him to a theatrical costumer's and laid in the fanciest Turkish costume money could buy—red turban, baggy green pants, gold-laced jacket, fez and all the rest of it. When he got them on—and did he love them!—he looked like the *pièce de résistance* of a Shriners' parade. Then I turned him loose on Broadway. He processioned uptown, with every loafer on Manhattan Island falling into step beside him and behind him, his chest swelling another half inch every hundred yards. This, you could see he was telling himself, was something like it at last. Finally, I made him stop off in a restaurant with a big plate-glass window in the front, sit down at a table reserved for him right where the crowd could see every move he made—and start eating. He killed six steaks in rapid succession, interspersed with bushels of vegetables and whole loaves of bread, washed down by a couple of quarts of milk and followed by four different desserts. I had some of the steaks brought on

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raw, explaining that the Turk was too hungry to wait for them to be broiled. The reporters had been duly tipped off to be on hand and the next morning the Terrible Turk—my new name for him—was on every front page in the country. First and last he must have got as much space in the papers as Admiral Dewey.

Fundamentally, he was a freak attraction and I played him as such. Quite aside from his fantastic appearance and cockeyed habits, however, he had the additional advantage of producing the goods in the ring, as most freaks cannot do. With the advantage of all this publicity, I matched him with Ernst Roeber, a first-rate German wrestler, who called himself the American champion, at the old Madison Square Garden. Roeber was probably the best man in the country, but the Turk got him down on the floor in pretty short order—and Roeber started fouling. People were always fouling the Turk—something about his very appearance frightened them so they forgot the rules and pulled anything that promised to rescue them from his clutches. And fouling was the one thing that always made the Turk go haywire. On this occasion he treated Roeber the same way he had the negro in Washington—threw him out of the ring. Since it was a boxing-ring, with high ropes and a considerable drop to the floor, it didn't do Roeber a bit of good when he landed on his head. Which produced another riot.

I know wrestling draws lots of money nowadays. But it isn't the same game it was forty years ago. The mod-

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ern version is largely circus stuff put on for customers who don't know much about wrestling, and just like to see the boys toss each other round. The old version was real wrestling, pretty much on the square for a while, and the fans knew enough about its fine points to go for good work. There were three main varieties—catch-as-catch-can, Graeco-Roman—the most popular version, barring all holds below the waist—and collar-and-elbow. Our first bout with Roeber was Graeco-Roman and it was Roeber's going desperately to work on the Turk's legs that moved him to heave Roeber out of the ring. Eventually, of course, the fact that wrestling is the easiest of all sports to fake inspired unscrupulous promoters to all kinds of funny business, and wrestling hit the skids. That happens every five years or so in a regular cycle. As soon as the game catches on again and begins to make a little money, that attracts the vultures and the vultures ruin it in short order.

Everywhere this overgrown what-is-it scared the living daylight out of his opponents. But his triumph in that line was the panic he inspired in a handsome Greek called Heraklides in another Garden bout. To avoid more throwing people out of rings, we pitched this ring on the floor, a canvas with padding beneath. A match between a Greek and a Turk was a whooping natural, of course, since the Turks and the Greeks are always fighting or wanting to. Nobody had ever heard of Heraklides, but he was ballyhooed as big stuff and

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the house was crowded to see the ancient feud fought out. Half the time the Turk knew nothing about his opponent till he saw him in the ring, but this time I'd taken care to let him know it was a Greek he had to deal with—and he was steamed up for fair. He got into the ring first and sat there on his chair glowering like the giant Blunderbore announcing he smelt the blood of an Englishman.

Then the Greek appeared. He had to come down a long flight of stairs to reach the ring. His hair was all oiled and curled, he wore an elegant silk dressing-gown and, as he tripped down the steps bowing and smiling and blowing kisses, all he needed was a ballet-skirt and an orchestra. But, when he reached the ring and saw the Turk, who had half risen from his chair and was sort of clutching for him with his huge, hairy hands, the Greek stopped dead and almost turned and ran. All the while they were persuading him into the ring and taking off his dressing-gown, his face grew grayer with blank terror. When he had to walk to the middle of the ring for instructions, he actually tottered. And, once the Turk laid hands on him, it was just too bad. It turned out afterwards that he was just a local amateur whom some Greek promoter had weaned away from a fruit-stand to make a little money with. He did get a couple of thousand, but I wouldn't let myself in for such a gibbering fright as that for twenty times the money.

When we took the Turk through the Middle West,



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taking on the big wrestlers out there, our progress was just a series of shindies. We had a riot in Cleveland, when we wrestled Tom Jenkins, who is now wrestling instructor at West Point, and was nearer a match for the Turk than any other man I ever saw him wrestle. We had a riot in Cincinnati that time the Turk lay on Charles Whitman for an hour and forty-five minutes. We had a riot in Chicago when we wrestled "Strangler" Lewis—the old Strangler, not the modern one. The audience consisted largely of the old-time Stockyards Gang, famous from coast to coast as tough eggs—they had all bet their shirts on Lewis and, to protect their investment, had supplied their own referee. In due time the referee whacked the Turk on the shoulder, made him get up and gave the bout to Lewis on a foul. "What foul?" I wanted to know. "Palate-hold," said the referee. I'd never heard of a palate-hold before, nor, I shrewdly suspect, had anybody else. At that point, I got into the ring and announced that, very well, Lewis was the winner. But it was a dirty deal and, now that the crooked money behind the frame-up had had its innings, we'd wrestle Lewis again right on the spot to prove who was the better man. The crowd came over to our side and made such a racket that Lewis had to come back into the ring—and the Turk threw him twice in five minutes. Lewis was carried from the ring.

And we had a riot of riots when we wrestled Roeber again at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York.

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Wrestling didn't really belong in the Met at all. But Madison Square Garden was unavailable and we needed lots of room. Knowing that I'd pay through the nose if necessary, Frank Sanger, manager of the Met—a solemn and proud gentleman who was known as "One Percent" Sanger for obvious reasons—stuck me \$1500 for the house, although we both knew very well the usual price was round \$500. We set up our ring on the Met's sacrosanct stage and the fun began, with a packed house licking its lips and craving trouble.

They got it. Even if there hadn't been plenty of bad blood remaining from the first bout, Roeber's camp and ours would have been at daggers drawn, since Roeber was trainer for Bob Fitzsimmons, who naturally didn't care for me as Corbett's erstwhile manager—and Fitz was to be Roeber's second. Roeber was a pretty fair boxer, as well as a fine wrestler. He'd have been better still with gloves on if he hadn't suffered from the usual wrestler's trouble of overdeveloped shoulder muscles—what they call muscle-bound. That evening he remembered his boxing at the wrong moment. Once again the Turk got him down and, after some time of desperate wriggling on Roeber's part, let him up again to try for a new hold. As soon as he was free, Roeber hauled off and clipped the Turk a very pretty clout on the jaw. The Turk straightened up and blinked like a child learning there is no Santa Claus. It was the first time he'd ever met a fist that meant business. The crowd came to its feet shrieking and hollering and I

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hopped into the ring claiming "Foull" for all I was worth. That's a good second's first duty. Between you and me, if the people in Firpo's corner had been on their toes about fouls when Firpo fought Dempsey, Luis Angel Firpo might have been champion of the world for a time—although it was that same night that Dempsey proved himself one of the greatest fighters that ever lived.

Everything started happening at once about the time I struck the ring. Fitzsimmons came out of Roeber's corner to meet me and gave me a shove in the chest that sent me backwards to the edge. I came back on the rebound and let him have it—the heavyweight champion, no less—square on the point of the jaw for all I had in me. Then I went away from there hastily, with Fitz coming after me, that hairy freckled right hand of his cocked and ready. But he hadn't got six steps when a policeman appeared behind him, flourishing a two-foot hickory nightstick. He was a friend of mine.

"Lay a hand on that lad," he said to Fitzsimmons, "and, champion or no champion, I'll break this club right across your skull."

So Fitz thought better of it. There was plenty to distract both of us from our private war. The referee was standing in the middle with the dazed look of a man having a bad dream. Between the crowd trying to get on the stage to mix in the row and the police beating them back in the interest of law, if not order, and the boys in the sacred dress-circle, ordinarily consecrated

to millionaires and diamond tiaras, tearing down invaluable tapestries and heaving upholstered chairs into the orchestra, we had as fine a mess as the old Macready-Forrest riots in Astor Place.

At the moment I was too mad to appreciate the humor of it. I didn't really get the joke till I heard of the manner in which my friend Sanger had received the news. It seems he had been sitting in the garden of the Hotel Cecil in London, having something long, cool and stimulating with Charles Frohman and telling him—Frohman never liked me any too well—how he'd stuck me for triple the usual price for the Metropolitan. Whereupon another American interrupted the story by leaning over and handing Sanger a copy of the *New York Times*, just arrived, with big headlines on the front page: "RIOT IN METROPOLITAN OPERA HOUSE." It wasn't long afterwards that Sanger left the Metropolitan and turned his talents in other directions.

As for my taking a poke at Fitzsimmons, that wasn't as much to brag about as it may sound. I'd have handed Paul Bunyan one the same way just then, being too sore to have good sense. And besides, I was a nippy enough boxer in my own right to be able to take care of myself for a little while.

Our fun and games with the Turk didn't last much longer. In spite of his affection for me as a source of thick steaks and gold pieces he was getting harder to handle. I had a scheme for touring him out to the







HOLBROOK BLINN  
in "The Boss"  
1911  
(Culver Service)



DAVID WARFIELD  
1937



GABY DESLYS in "Vera Violetta"  
WINTER GARDEN  
1911

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Pacific coast to take on some of the prominent local performers and, the more I talked about it, the less he seemed to like it. His experiences as far west as Chicago had been pretty rough and he was anxious to get away from this savage America and back to civilized Turkey. Still, I hadn't realized how badly he was feeling about it until he disappeared one day—slipped out on my lieutenant in charge, walked out of the hotel and never turned up again. Somebody had made him a proposition that involved going back home, ostensibly at least, but we never knew who it was. All we knew was that the Terrible Turk was a steerage passenger on *La Bourgogne*, the French steamer that rammed a sailing-vessel off the Newfoundland Banks and went down in one of the worst marine disasters in history. The sailors went crazy and so did the steerage, from the best anybody could ever find out about it. Out of seventy women on board, only one was saved. And, by the irony of fate, the first bath the Terrible Turk ever took in his life was the death of him. When they found his body, he still had on his money-belt, but the sharks had torn it open and all the gold had gone to the bottom.

Once I'd branched out, I didn't stop with wrestling. There were plenty of other popular sports that well repaid attention. From a modern point of view the sports set-up of those times probably sounds as queer and old-fashioned as a mustache-cup. Many of the sports that now draw big crowds and big money hadn't

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yet come into existence. Horses and baseball were flourishing all right. But football was either small time or purely collegiate. Ice-hockey didn't exist indoors and no crowd was going to spend money to stand and freeze on the banks of an outdoor rink. Basketball had hardly been invented yet. But there were plenty of kinds of competition, now wholly or partly dead, for the public to spend its money on.

Bicycling had already been the big thing for ten or fifteen years when I got into it. Everybody was riding a wheel and arguing about the merits of well-known makes. There were pieces in the papers about the dangers of the scorching speed the bicycling craze had brought in its wake. Cigarette packages carried pictures of famous cycle-racers right up along with musical-comedy stars and baseball heroes. Small boys knew by heart the records of Cannon Ball Eddie Bald, the Adonis of the wheelmen, Major Taylor, the great negro rider, and Tom Cooper, A. A. Zimmerman, Fred Kramer and the rest. It was a sensational sport in its day. A champion streaking round the track hunkered over on his wheel in one of the old-time thirty-mile races was the epitome of human speed. And dangerous. Take a spill off a speeding bicycle on a hardwood track and you'd be better off if you'd stopped one of Joe Louis' punches. It was hardly better on the big concrete oval that our outfit built on Manhattan Beach.

Our outfit, to which I contributed my general promoter's background, consisted of myself, Pat Powers,

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then a baseball promoter, J. C. Kennedy, a newspaper man, and A. G. Batchelder, the president of the all-powerful American Wheelmen's Association. We left our mark on the business. It was we, for instance, who introduced America to paced racing. We brought over its chief exponent, Jimmy Michael, the famous Welsh Rarebit, who was the idol of the cycling world during his short career. His opponents used to laugh out loud when they saw this pink-cheeked midget, hardly out of short pants, trotting his wheel out on the track to compete with grown men. But, once he was in the saddle and digging into the pedals behind his pace, he turned into a streaking wonder. He made so much money and received so much adoration—particularly from the ladies, who thought he was the cutest thing they'd ever seen in their lives—that his head was badly turned. Most of his winnings went in a misguided effort to turn himself into an owner-jockey, with a big racing stable. And then, when he finally got started home to take the remains of his money to his mother, he took sick and died on shipboard—out of the running at nineteen.

Paced racing has been about as dead as Mayan ring-ball. It always did survive in Newark, N. J., and there's an effort being made now to revive it, with motorcycle-pacing, in New York. But it's all Greek to the general public, so I suppose it calls for some explanation. It developed from the curious fact that a cyclist makes much better time if, instead of pushing round the

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track on his own, he follows something faster than he normally would be. The effect seems to be mostly psychological. For pacing we used great long bicycles—multicycles we called them—with four or six or eight sets of pedals and saddles, a veteran racer in each saddle and the whole kaboodle tearing round the track with the combined power of four, six or eight pairs of legs—and the poor devil of a racer breaking his neck to stay right behind them, so he wouldn't "lose his pace." Six contestants, each with his own set of pacers, would mean as many as fifty-four men on the track at once—and quite a spectacle they made when the thing got going good. That was why our outfit had to keep on hand a tremendous stable of well-known riders. There was a time when practically every first-class man in the country was under contract to us.

Women as well as men got into the cycle-races. The first six-day race ever held—the idea developing out of the old six-day, go-as-you-please walking races—put the Canadian champion, a fellow named Adams, trying to cover as many miles in six days as two girls, Louise Armaindo and Elsa von Blumen, could cover between them. Back then they were still using high-wheeled machines—uncommonly tricky contraptions on unbanked tracks. But you could work up a respectable speed and go a long way even under those conditions. An old-timer named Terron once pushed a high-wheeled bike three hundred thirty-nine miles in



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twenty-four hours riding in circles on a board floor—not even a special track laid—just a circle chalked on the boards.

Adams won in his contest with the ladies, but I doubt if he could have a few years later when Miss Armaindo became a formidable rider. Seven hundred sixty miles in six days was her eventual record. Just a slip of a girl too, as girls went in those ample times—only five feet two and weighed barely one hundred thirty pounds. Her ancestors had all been French-Canadian strong men. She used to brag about Joe Muffarro, a world-famous Canuck husky:

“My Oncle Joe, he one gr-r-r-r-and Frenchman! He so strong it take seex poleesmen to hold hees hat!” And she was no slouch at the strong-arm stuff herself. I’ve seen her lift seven hundred fifty pounds without harness or shoulder-straps.

Once six-day cycling races got started, they went like wildfire. Our high-water mark in that line was the six-day race at Madison Square Garden in 1898 when Charley Miller covered two thousand seven miles in the one hundred forty-four hours, taking only nine and a quarter hours’ sleep during the process. That always struck me as a much more impressive feat than the record of Charley (“Mile-a-Minute”) Murphy, who hit the front pages all over the country by pedaling a mile in fifty-seven and two-fifth seconds down a board track laid between the rails of a straightaway

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on the Long Island Railroad. He was paced by a locomotive, you see, which carried a huge windshield behind to help him by creating suction.

Miller had nothing but two wheels and two feet to help him. People refused to believe that he could have lived through six days of such exertion without more sleep than that. But those figures were straight. A Professor Atwater from Wesleyan was there all the time, getting data for the government on the relation between food and energy, and his assistants had every rider's sleep and rations checked down to a gnat's heel.

That sort of record started the humane societies—and the disgruntled politicians who were failing to get theirs out of the big money in cycle-races—protesting about cruelty to riders. It was nonsense, of course. Why, Miller took it so easy knocking off his two thousand seven miles that, the last afternoon of the race, he stopped to get married to his best girl, who'd been loyally cheering him on for five days. I was one of the witnesses, blissfully conscious of the publicity values involved, and "Dutch" Waller, Miller's most deadly rival in the race, was the first man to kiss the bride. As soon as the ceremony was over, they hopped back on their wheels. After Miller won the race, he went straight on to his wedding breakfast at the Hotel Bartholdi. He refused even to consider making up any sleep until he'd been properly wined and dined—which is hardly the behavior of a man suffering from exhaustion.

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Or, if you want more proof of what human beings are capable of, take old Dan O'Leary, the walking wonder. Dan covered 250,000 racing miles in his lifetime. At sixty-four he was still hearty enough to walk a thousand miles in a thousand hours, getting up and doing another mile every hour and then going back to sleep. And he died, prematurely burned out, I suppose, just a month shy of ninety-one.

But the humane societies and the politicians kept right on petitioning, until the New York legislature passed laws prohibiting both human beings and animals from participating in any kind of contest for more than twelve hours at a stretch. The animals came in through such popular stunts as a man racing a horse for six days—the man usually winning. I've never been able to understand why Theodore Roosevelt, then governor of New York, ever signed that bill, since he was both intelligent and a lover of sport. But there it was—and the kick immediately went out of six-day racing. It still goes on, of course, in a watered-down form, and is very popular in New York and some other large cities. But, try as I can, I can't fathom that popularity. And I should be able to understand it, if anybody can, since I was the fellow who, trying to salvage something out of the wreck, invented this new type of race—two-man teams, with one fellow spelling the other to keep within the twelve-hour law.

The modern six-day race is about as much like the old bottled-in-bond variety as my acting is like Edwin

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Booth's. Year before last's race in New York, these two-man teams hardly covered any more ground between them than Charley Miller covered all by his lonesome—with time off to get married—thirty-eight years ago. Just how much of a race it is comes out in the peculiar fact that all competing teams covered the same number of miles, with only a few laps to choose among them. It's just some hundred and forty-odd hours of stalling, interspersed by artificially staged sprints, and then a last half hour of furious pedaling to make it look like something at the end. Those may be harsh words, my masters, but nobody has a better right to run a thing down than the fellow who invented it.

These two-man team races didn't go at all well for a long while. It wasn't till they introduced the sprints that the public started flocking back. And the sprints started as the impromptu contribution of the drunks who used to go and spend whole days and nights at the six-day races, watching the boys spin round and round till they got dizzy and fell asleep, and waking up to have some more drinks to make sure they wouldn't sober up. When one of these saturated star-boarders would wake up between three and four in the morning, glance blearily at the track to make sure where he was and see the riders loafing round just to keep the ball rolling, he'd often stand up and holler:

"Hey! Fifty dollars fer a sprin'!" And immediately the riders would snap to and start pedaling like fury

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to give the drunk his money's worth, split up among them. Sometimes a small-time Coal Oil Johnny would go as high as \$500 to start something, and every time the spectators would brighten up amazingly. After a while the management caught on and started the sprints as a regular part of the program.

Still, even if the six-day races are only a parody of the old-time performances, I have a soft spot in my heart for them. I courted my wife most successfully during an all-night session at a six-day race in the old Garden.

Wrestling, bicycling, and heaven knows what all—I was like the fellow in "The Jumping Frog" who would bet on anything. The public was having an orgy of freak contests and there was no telling what they'd jump after next. I don't expect to be believed, but serious records were really kept of the best performances in such events as quail-eating, butchering, oyster-opening, newspaper-folding, goose-picking, shaving and bean-eating. I was one of the people who gave them whatever lunacy they happened to be craving at the moment. When broadsword combats on horseback got popular, I immediately imported Duncan C. Ross, the European champion in this sport—if you call it sport. It certainly proved that anything which involves possible death—motor-racing, bicycle-racing or what not—is sure fire. Those broadsword artists fought with real swords, not very sharp perhaps, but heavy and wielded with the full power of brawny



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arms. For protection they wore only padding round the shoulders and a light steel helmet which didn't soften the shock of a clout on the head at all and occasionally cracked to let the sword go on down through the skull. But I must admit that Ross, a born artist in any kind of physical activity and an all-round athlete along the same lines as Jim Thorpe, made a fine show out of this gladiatorial business.

When the tug-of-war burst into temporary glory, I staged tugs-of-war at the old Garden, nailing cleats on the floor to give the tuggers the same purchase they were accustomed to on soft ground. When cakewalking contests suddenly flared up for no reason at all, I hurriedly whipped together a troupe of cakewalkers and sent them round the key cities for a brilliant clean-up. The whites flocked to see the fun—twenty or thirty couples of darkies cakewalking down the stage and being eliminated one by one—and the negroes flocked to compete with my professionals, being allowed to win now and again, of course, just to keep the contest gag going. I earned that money, for I was a good half of the show in my own right, being barker, chairman and judge all at once. No such racket as that lasted long. You had to clean up in a hurry before the next craze arrived. I know that flagpole sitting and marathon dancing and such have made the recent past pretty screwy, but you can take an expert's word for it that the late nineties were even screwier.

I must have been one of the best customers in the

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history of the old Madison Square Garden, the one with St. Gaudens' gilt Diana on top. If I didn't have something going on there, I was racking my brains for an idea that would get me back. I stepped farthest out of character probably when I tried giving a big theatrical ball in the Garden, to be an annual event along the lines of the French Ball which, under the auspices of the Cercle de l'Harmonie, annually tore New York wide open. It didn't turn into an annual event—it was a miserable failure. But the French Ball was something worth shooting at. I suppose the modern Beaux Arts affair is the nearest thing to it—and the Beaux Arts lacks the build-up which the name French carried with it forty years ago. By definition anything French was considered very naughty and most intriguing. Everybody who could raise the price of a ticket went to catch a glimpse of that wicked Paris. The society folk occupied the boxes to be stared at for a while and then went home. The commonalty stayed on to watch the can-can being danced in the middle of the floor and to get gloriously fried in the wine rooms that were set up in odd corners of the place. Toward the shank of the evening those French Ball wine rooms looked like the remains of an Orangemen's riot.

Lots of the time I was taking over somebody else's idea after he'd failed with it. But my woman suffrage exhibition at the old Garden was my own idea—one of the earliest large-scale recognitions of the suffrage movement America ever saw. It was still another fif-

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teen years before American women got the vote, but Mrs. Pankhurst's antics in England were getting a big play in the American press and I smelled something to promote. So I filled the Garden with a sort of a female World's Fair. Not a man in the place except myself, and I stayed out of sight—women ticket-takers, women ushers, women dancers, women singers, police-women, women all the way. The manufacturers had paid me handsomely to fill the main floor with exhibits of women's articles—clothing, sewing-machines and such. You could make a fortune out of the cosmetics manufactured today with the same set-up, but this was back before lipstick and powder had moved uptown. The Garden basement, cleaned up, was devoted to exhibits of the women of all nations, genuine natives, engaged in characteristic activities—Irish women making linen, Turkish women making cigarettes, all of which was tied in with national chambers of commerce.

But I did have to stay out of the picture, and half the fun I got out of these odd jugglings lay in the sport of taking a hand myself. I never enjoyed myself more than during the cakewalking tour—except possibly when I was running the battleship *Oregon* in a reproduction of the battle of Santiago.

That was another case of picking up something good that was starving for attention. Shortly after the Spanish War an ingenious German arrived in New York bringing with him two fleets of miniature battleships to re-enact the sinking of the battleship *Maine*

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and the battle of Santiago for the patriotic public. These battleships were the most elaborate toys imaginable—long as a rowboat, with smoke pouring from their funnels and guns that actually fired and all kinds of tricks—they blew up and caught fire and turned turtle just like real warships attending to business. The controlling gadgets were all operated by electricity and juggled by a man who sat inside, legs stretched straight out front along the keel and eyes peering out of a domino-slit in the highest turret. But, when the German put his show on in the Garden, flooding the place to make an artificial lake for his toys to maneuver in, he didn't have either the money or the experience to put it over as it deserved.

The whole layout took my fancy the way a toy train tickles a small boy. So I took over from the German and transported the show to Chicago to try it again, at Tattersall's, then the Chicago equivalent of the Garden. I advertised the thing like the end of the world and felt certain I had a winner on my hands. But then trouble began. The German's staff of assistants, the fellows who sat in the battleships and managed the gadgets, went on strike because, although I was paying the German handsomely, he was still paying them on the original scale prevailing in Europe, which was uncommonly low. The upshot was that they deserted—all but one—and I was left with nothing but a number of splendid war vessels, a tank of water, a lot of rent to pay—and no crews.

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I'd long been accustomed to stepping into any old kind of role at a moment's notice in the theater. But my naval training had been badly neglected, and it was with natural misgiving that I decided to turn admiral, hire some bright boys, and, with the surviving German's assistance, train a whole new set of captains to steer the ships. I felt even worse about it the first time I got into one of those floating coffins and tried my hand at running it. I suppose the driver of a whip-pet tank is in much the same situation—and he's been trained to the business, which I distinctly had not. The whole interior of the thing was lined with electrical gadgets. Touch one at the wrong time and you got an electrical shock that jarred your teeth loose.

But at least I had to start the job to keep up the morale of my raw recruits and, after I began to get the hang of the things, I fell in love with the assignment. I could have trained a new man to run the *Oregon* as well as the other vessels, but it was too grand a feeling, this dashing up just in the nick of time from a forced-draft voyage round the Horn, with the house cheering and the rest of the fleet saluting. It was even more fun to blaze away at Cervera's fleet, shooting little torpedoes that made as much noise as a trap-shooting tournament. A grand money's worth for the customers too, but I'd have done it whether it was profitable or not. I got quite a kick out of hearing about what happened when an assistant of mine ar-



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rived in Chicago and came tearing over to Tattersall's to see me about some great emergency.

"Where's Mr. Brady?" he shouted at the first functionary he saw.

"Brady?" said the functionary. "You can't see him right now. He's coming round the Horn in the *Oregon*."

And this was the period when I'd given up managing prize-fighters because it was too undignified! In that direction I was certainly getting nowhere fast.

Still, I'm accustomed to looking back on myself and getting a good laugh. Here is a letter from David Warfield, received a couple of years ago, which records some more of my unconscious comedy:

"Dear Will:

I opened the play, 'The Inspector,' in Newark, N. J., on the night before Christmas, 1890, in which I had a couple of lines to speak, for which I received \$25 a week. It was truly a generous gesture on your part, because it was much more than I was worth, and besides you gave me my first chance in the theater. I've never forgotten it, Willie! And now do you recall that I did a monologue in the last act, in which I told the story of a scene in a Jewish lodge—and during the week you came over to see the play and told me to cut out the Jewish story, because you said I couldn't portray a Jewish character? . . .

And now, my dear old friend, let me wish you a Merry Christmas and a happy and a fruitful New Year.

Sincerely,

David Warfield."

Get that? Every time I reflect with appropriate satisfaction that it was I who sneaked David Warfield out

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of a twelve performances a day, eighteen-dollar a week imitations act at Huber's Museum and introduced him to the legitimate—which I did—I also have to reflect that, in all solemn idiocy, I told him he couldn't portray a Jewish character.

The only thing I ever heard of to match that is the story about how Edwin Booth's famous father told him that he had the makings of a brilliant banjo-player, but he'd never get anywhere as an actor. I've been eating my words to Warfield ever since, through his days with Weber and Fields and on with "The Music Master"—and by no means least when he put on his brilliant performance of Shylock some ten or twelve years ago.

That's the way it goes. Now you see it and now you don't. It's the old army game and an infant in arms can play it as well as a man.

MARY NASH  
AND  
HENRY HULL

*in*  
"The Man Who Came Back"  
1916

WHITE STUDIO



WHITE STUDIO

KATHARINE CORNELL  
in "The Enchanted Cottage," 1923



WHITE STUDIO

HELEN HAYES WITH KENNETH MACKENNA  
in Barrie's "What Every Woman Knows", 1926





## *Chapter VII*

A SHOWMAN OFTEN HAS TO STICK PRETTY CLOSE TO THE news to get the most out of his public. That is the principle behind a good many of the more picturesque things that go on in the world of box-office, ranging from Hollywood's gangster films down to the racket of booking lady-murderesses as vaudeville performers. It's always at least even money that pure, old-fashioned curiosity is going to make lots of people pay to see events or people who've been in the headlines. And, if you can also give them a good show for their money, it's a fine idea.

People who were kids thirty-five and forty years ago will certainly remember the great interest taken by the American public in the Boer War. Kruger and Cronje, Ladysmith and Pretoria were as well known in their time as San Juan Hill and Admiral Dewey. That interest continued even after the war petered out into skirmishing and was still lively when peace was definitely established. In consequence, it was extremely logical that the people back of the St. Louis World's Fair should listen seriously when approached by a



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British war veteran named Captain Lewis with a proposal to import sample batches of British and Boer fighters and re-enact the famous battles of the war at the Fair.

Since the captain was just as broke as military men usually are, he had to be financed. Backing was furnished by a civic-minded group of St. Louis business men, headed by a big executive who was head of the largest wholesale drug outfit in the country. When Lewis started recruiting performers in South Africa, he was swamped by applicants. Regular pay and a trip to America, with the World's Fair thrown in, appealed strongly to recently demobilized fighting men. He landed four or five hundred assorted veterans from both sides and, for showpieces, General Cronje, the Boer hero of the whole war, General Viljoen, a Mexican soldier of fortune who acquired quite a reputation on the Boer side, and the notorious Captain Jack Hendon, whom Lord Roberts alleged to be a renegade who had devoted himself to blowing up British hospital trains. Hendon didn't exactly rate as a hero, but he was certain to attract a lot of profitable curiosity.

Well, these all wool and a yard wide fighters, reproducing the battle of Colenso and the siege of Paardeberg and such items of recent history, with Cronje riding out in a little wagon to surrender his sword to a prop Lord Roberts for finale, was as much the feature of the St. Louis Fair as Sally Rand was of the recent doings in Chicago. Its sole rival was the Phil-

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ippine exhibition, which drew large crowds by exhibiting a group of natives who daily burned a dog alive as preparation for eating it. After the government made the Filipinos stop that, the Boer War was unchallenged cock of the walk.

Everybody was talking about the Boer War at the Fair—and presently Orlando Harriman, brother of E. H. Harriman, was talking to me about it as something we could make money with. He held an option on a strip of useless marsh with over a mile of riparian rights between the Brighton Beach Hotel and the Manhattan Beach Hotel out Coney Island way. His idea was to take up the option and fill in the marsh and start a big amusement layout to compete with Luna Park—the chief feature to be a huge stadium for displaying the Boer War show after St. Louis was through with it. It was a half-million-dollar proposition for the land alone. But Harriman knew all the answers in financial juggling and, by means of my credit and a flock of assorted mortgages and the fact that he was agent for the sale, we got the land without sinking a real dollar in it. My end was to supply the knowledge of show business which Harriman singularly lacked—and corral the Boer War. In those times I was the logical man to swing such a deal. They started filling in our swamp and putting up the biggest roller-coaster in the world and the biggest merry-go-round in the world and a midway with concessions—a miniature world's fair, in short—and I headed for St. Louis.

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When I got there, I found competition. Somebody else wanted the Boer War—none other than Mr. Wall, the eminent wholesale druggist, who was itching to turn showman on his own hook and tour the thing through the south and southwest all winter *à la* Buffalo Bill. He knew nothing about shows, but was convinced that this was the biggest thing in that line since Jumbo, and his prominence among the original backers of the scheme gave him an inside track. The thing was already something of a mess. Wall and Lewis were at loggerheads most of the time, and Lewis, to keep his foot in the door, had sewed up Cronje, the centerpiece of the show, in an exclusive contract at \$1500 a week. I liked the strength of Lewis' position, so I hitched up with him and tried to get Wall to bring the outfit to Coney Island the next summer, as soon as he'd lost all he wanted to in his southern tour. If he didn't, we figured, we could take Cronje and Viljoen, who was also under contract to Lewis personally, hire some likely riders and shooters from western talent, and put on our own Boer War, regardless of Wall and the rank and file. The show without Cronje would be Valley Forge without George Washington.

But Wall, stubborn as amateurs always are, insisted on taking enough rope to hang himself, so I settled back to wait till experience had wised him up. He started his troupe off through the south and came a cropper at every stand. He stuck to it longer than anybody had expected, but even so it was still early spring

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when the crash came and the outfit was stranded in a little town somewhere in Mississippi. We got a telegram indicating surrender. I immediately sent Lewis funds to bring the show to New York and started rushing our construction to completion at Coney Island.

Those Boer War veterans had already seen their share of hardships. But, by the time they got through with southern troupng under canvas, they'd probably gladly have returned to the comparative comfort of guerrilla warfare on the African veldt. Their troubles had begun even before they left South Africa. Either Lewis' backing was inadequate or he miscalculated handling it—anyway, when they reached Capetown, they didn't have enough money to pay their passage and got to the United States only because the captain of a ship was gambler enough to fetch them over on spec and hold them in pawn at New Orleans until the St. Louis crowd ponied up. After the Fair it was tough enough on Wall to find out so expensively that show business is no place for amateurs. But it was even tougher on the veterans who had to take the consequences on the ground. After the first few weeks they seem to have lived without salaries and without hope, braving the terrors of cheap southern boarding houses and sitting up all night in day-coaches between stands.

Besides, to make sure everything was comfortable, the bad blood between British and Boers which had already shown up in St. Louis cropped up tougher and tougher as times got worse. Lewis' job was about as

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unhandy as keeping the peace between a regiment of Hessians and a regiment of Continentals in 1784. He had to keep the two camps strictly separate, like men and women at a Quaker meeting. Otherwise, both parties would have loaded up with something more damaging than blanks and fought Bloemfontein all over again. It wasn't just a plain feud either. It was three-and four-cornered. Boers and British alike hated Lewis, who probably had failed to come through on some of his more glowing promises. And the British were in a constant state of exasperation because they had to endure the presence of Hendon, the renegade. They hadn't known he was to be part of the picture until they landed and encountered him working round the show in a business capacity as well as partaking in the fight-scenes. A nice, chummy party all round.

On their arrival at Coney Island they were the sorriest-looking crew in Christendom. The generals came in Pullmans, but, as a measure of economy, Wall had shipped everybody else in a freight train. They were sleeping in hammocks slung across box-cars, fifteen or twenty men to the car, chilly, starved, dirty, dismal—and fighting mad. For a few short hours the beauties of Coney Island snapped them out of their misery. We'd set up a real military encampment for them—cook-house, hospital, floored tents and the rest of it—and the sight of a whole ocean to bathe in and places where edible food could be obtained actually



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produced a few smiles on their unshaven countenances. But, as soon as the demon Rum entered the picture, they reverted to their nine months of fairly well-justified bad temper.

As soon as night fell, their environment did become extremely depressing. The whole property was littered with lumber and canvas and the disorder that goes with a big construction job. Coney Island was still closed for the winter—a few pinpoints of electric light were the only illumination. And a dirty-looking storm was blowing up out at sea. By a natural human instinct, everybody in the outfit made a bee-line for the only bar in the neighborhood that was open. It was just a little doggery out back which, in a pinch, might hold twenty men comfortably. But our boys crowded in by forties and fifties, demanding hard liquor—and Coney Island whisky was always both hard and bad—coming in sober, leaving half an hour later drunk, and rapidly becoming ugly as a she-bear in March. It was just a question of time till the Boer-British feud started up and then we'd be in for a livelier night than I cared to contemplate.

So I summoned my merry men—a couple of plain-clothes detectives and a handful of strong-arm artists who had been hired for just such emergencies—and marched at their head into the barroom where the damage was being done. I needed backing, for, by this time, they had a new goat to pin their troubles on. It

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wasn't Lewis any longer—it was me. I was getting all the blame for the rigors of that one-jump journey by freight train.

The ringleader in all the hollering and blustering was an ugly, shambling Boer with a loud mouth and body as broad as it was long, who had been a wrestler by trade before he took up soldiering. When I entered the bar, he was leaning up against Lewis, a good three sheets in the wind, and telling him in detail just what he was going to do to this man Brady when he met him. It was an interesting description. Followed by my henchmen, I stepped up and tapped him on the shoulder:

“My name's Brady,” I said.

He looked round, detached himself from Lewis and silently and solemnly punched me in the jaw. I punched him in the jaw to match and then, remembering the French sport of *la savate* which I'd met during Corbett's European tour, retreated to the wall and got a good brace. As the Boer rushed me, I picked the right moment and kicked him solidly in the solar plexus. He sailed backward through the air all hunkered over like a skater racing against time, crashed against the opposite wall and landed in a heap, winded and sick. The crowd contemplated him, then me, then my myrmidons, who were as tough-looking a set of thugs as you could hope to see and really could have cleaned out the place in ten minutes—and decided to be good boys. From then on I got a snappy hand salute from every

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general, major, non-com and private in the outfit whenever and wherever we met.

Naturally, you couldn't trail that kind of mob round the country without losing men through illness and desertion. To fill the gaps in their ranks we hired some local ringers. They weren't all nature's noble-men, these recruits of ours, and a few of them proceeded to get into trouble with the law right away. When it came out in court that these purported Boer heroes were named Murphy, Ginsberg and Greenfield, nasty remarks were made both in the press and from the bench—"The prisoners," said one magistrate, "are obviously boorish, but they don't seem very Boerish."

That was bad medicine just before our show opened. But it went fine for a while and our thirty percent of the proceeds was a young gold mine while it lasted. Our stadium seated sixteen thousand and we filled it again and again by giving the customers more scenery and effects and noise than Coney Island has seen since—which is saying something. But, although Harriman and I were making money, the troupe's seventy percent just couldn't be big enough to cover the back-salaries that had been piling up for months in the sunny southland. About the middle of August our armies began to come apart much after the fashion of the Russian army in late '17. Lewis ran the thing on a co-operative basis for a while to finish out the season on Labor Day. After that it was curtains. The

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boys knew what to do when she finally folded up. They all headed for Central America, where there was the usual trouble going on, to hire out as soldiers wherever the gold pieces looked likelier. They'd all been fighting so long that it was impossible for them to settle down to anything else. I bet there are little Latin-looking girls and boys in Guatemala and San Salvador today whose names are Smith and Dykgraaf because their papas were hornswoggled into coming over to fight the Boer War for the delectation of the St. Louis World's Fair.

But old General Cronje didn't go to Central America. He and his wife went back to Holland at my expense with \$2500 of back-salary coming out of my pocket to boot, because I had stood back of Lewis' arrangement with him. I didn't grudge the money. The war had left the old fellow flat broke and, as the man who had kept the conquest of the Boers from being the push-over the English had thought it would be, he was naturally pretty uncomfortable in South Africa after the British victory. The humiliation of having to make a public spectacle of himself in order to raise some money had worked on him pretty hard, I'm afraid, particularly during the hardships of the southern tour. But I'm glad to remember that his stay at Coney Island was probably the most pleasant few months of his life. We built him a little cottage within the stadium, way over where celebrity-seekers couldn't bother him, and there he sat on the porch and smoked

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his pipe and stroked his beard, peaceful as you please, just a taciturn, nice, tired old fellow with his work done. I used to go over and sit with him and listen, on those rare occasions when he talked much, to his tales in very broken English of the war. All he had to do in the show was get in his little wagon and take a turn round the arena with the crowd cheering him and then hand over his sword to the fellow who played Lord Roberts.

That may give you an idea of the risks of having to capitalize on the news if you aren't going to miss any tricks. I had a worse time and no profit whatever out of exploiting the furor caused by the discovery of the North Pole—with Dr. Cook and Admiral Peary splitting the nation into opposing camps as rival claimants. This is no place to go into the merits of the controversy between them. From the showman's point of view, however, the Doctor had it all over the Admiral, although the Admiral won the decision by outstaying his opponent. Whether he ever saw the Pole or not, Dr. Cook had the gift of gab and a fine sense of publicity. His stunt of taking along a barrel of gumdrops for the Eskimos on his Polar expedition was a honey. And, when his discovery was challenged, he said he'd buried a brass tube containing full proof at the Pole—"I didn't leave my visiting card because I didn't happen to have one on me. Let the skeptics who doubt my story go to the North Pole and see." When he was lecturing, turning them away at every stand, with the



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straw-votes standing 50 to 1 in his favor, he didn't spare the language either:

"An endless field of purple snows—no life—no land—no spot to relieve the monotony of the frost. We were the only pulsating creatures in a world of dead ice." There's a sample. You could set that to music and sing it, as Mr. Dooley recommended for William Jennings Bryan's oratory.

I tried to land Cook when he reached Copenhagen on his way back. But he knew all about lecture-tours and had already got himself booked for a tour before he ever started for the Pole. That was all of a piece with the fact that his backers were the Bradley brothers, of whom E. R. Bradley still survives as the maestro of the Palm Beach Casino and a chronic winner of the Kentucky Derby. I also tried to land Peary when he turned up with his story and started the public wondering about Cook. But Peary didn't even give me the courtesy of an answer. For third best—and a pretty good third too—I got Mat Henson, the negro who, along with three Eskimos, had accompanied Peary to the Pole itself. By Peary's own admission Henson had been the most valuable member of the party, except the Eskimos, in handling dogs and sledges. As the only negro in the list of Polar heroes, he was certain to attract a lot of attention from the public in general and be a terrific drawing card for his own race in particular. He was an intelligent, good-looking, soft-spoken, dead-panned, modest fellow who, I was sure, would

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easily ingratiate himself with audiences. A set-up—but it didn't work.

I broke him in for his lecture tour at Middletown, Conn., with the mayor of the city and a brass band meeting him at the station and escorting him to the hall. It has always been my theory—and it had never failed me before—that the combination of a silk hat and a Sousa march will draw a crowd in any city in America for no reason at all. And here I had Hero No. 2 of the biggest story of the year. Yet the inhabitants of Middletown, acting on some mysterious common impulse, snubbed Henson as completely as if his build-up had consisted of merely a sandwich-man. Receipts that afternoon were \$13.80. For the evening performance they climbed to \$23.

Obviously, we needed some big stunt to get Henson out of Peary's shadow and in the limelight on his own. Henson himself supplied that with the big argument he got into with Peary about who had exclusive rights to Henson's pictures of the expedition which we used as stereopticon slides—including the crucial shot of Peary, himself, and the three Eskimos at the Pole. In the process of the argument Henson had a good many pointed things to say about the inner workings of polar expeditions and why Peary had picked him instead of a white man as his companion for the final dash. At the same time he was turning into a fine performer on the platform, really giving his scanty audiences a great show for their money. But the far-

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ther we went, the heavier the losses were. Our lecture at the Hippodrome in New York cost \$1750 and brought in \$600.

The thing that disgusted me was the way Henson's own people refused to support him. If the negroes had given him a tenth of the play they've given Joe Louis—whom he somewhat resembled, as a matter of fact—he'd have been treated fairly enough. As it was, I had to compromise his contract, pay him off and let him drop into undeserved oblivion. He lives in Brooklyn now, holding down some obscure Federal job, which is about all he ever got out of being a negro who had outdone all white men but one in the three-hundred-year race for the Pole.

When I think back to this period, however, it's the Iroquois Fire in Chicago that I can never forget. I missed being in it by a couple of minutes. On the fatal afternoon—December 30, 1903—I had Wilton Lackaye in "The Pit" playing the Garrick Theater, just a block down the street from the Iroquois, doing tremendous business—after all, "The Pit," made out of Frank Norris' novel about the grain market, was laid in Chicago. The Iroquois had the other big show in town—Eddie Foy in "Bluebeard, Jr.," one of the Americanized English Christmas pantomimes, which were very popular back then. As soon as I had my show started in a packed matinee, I went down the street in one of those bitter cold midwinter days Chicago is so given to, to see how "Bluebeard, Jr.," was making out.

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Harry Powers, the manager there, was running over with exultation:

"Come on in, Bill," he said to me. "I want to show you what a real house looks like," and took me into the back of a stage-box. Foy was on stage doing a monologue. He walked over to the box and said: "Happy New Year, Bill," and I said, "Same to you, Eddie," and then turned and looked up into the house, jammed to the ceiling with children and young boys and girls and their parents celebrating the holidays.

"We've got just as good a house at the Garrick," I told Powers, "but it won't come to so much money," shook hands with him and strolled out of the theater. I wasn't a hundred feet down the sidewalk when a man came tearing past me, gasping in the cold, and shouting:

"The Iroquois Theater's on fire!"

I turned and ran back. A glance into the box-office showed a queer thing—the treasurer and his assistant frantically packing up money and tickets, paying no attention to what might be going on inside. But that was natural in men whose responsibility for money was their whole profession. Besides, nobody could have realized quite how quickly the worst would happen. By the time I was back in the foyer, which I'd left only a few minutes before, the whole story of the tragedy was already told. The two-story plate-glass screen that separated the auditorium from the foyer was burst at the top and a roaring loop of flame was shooting out

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of the hole, striking the far wall and curling back in again, slowly heating the place like an oven and striking murderous panic into the whole audience. Inside it was a reverberating figure-eight of fire from stage to screen.

What happened was that a calcium side-light set fire to the tormentor—an ornamental side-scene—and spread from there up into the flies, among the numberless drop-scenes which made up the scenery of “Bluebeard, Jr.” At the same time some fool had thrown open the big stage-doors where they brought in scenery, making a perfect draft from back-stage to foyer and back again. The burning gas went with the draft. The theater itself never burned—they could have given performances in it a couple of days afterwards. But it didn’t have to burn to kill its hundreds. The people from the balcony were piled in the narrow arched doorway at the head of the big gilt stairway—and already many of them must have been crushed to death. Many of those in the orchestra had mobbed the side-doors, which had never been inspected to see if they would open at all. And there was another fearful jam at the main orchestra-entrance.

The jam at the balcony door was the worst. The victims had climbed over one another until, after it was over, they were found jamming the doorway from top to bottom. The main floor exit into the lobby wasn’t as bad as that. I found myself there, helping to loosen the plug of frenzied men, women and children







MARY PICKFORD  
1917

IRA HILL



DOUGLAS FAIRBANKS AS "PHILOSOPHER JACK"  
in "The Lights of London," 1911

WHITE STUDIO

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by jerking the foremost through to loosen the jam behind. Working at my side I found a tramp off the streets, a regular threadbare, shivering, red-nosed Weary Willie, who had rushed in at the same time I had. He must have saved fifty people that day. And yet the first thing the police did on arrival was throw him out and threaten him with arrest if he showed up again.

Before long plenty of rescuers were on hand, more than could do any conceivable good, and I began to think of my own audience at the Garrick. If the news of the Iroquois ever reached there, we'd have another panic of equal proportions. A single whisper of the two words "fire" and "theater" would be fatal. I tore downstreet to the Garrick and back-stage to see Lack-aye, telling him what was happening.

"I'm counting on you to save this audience," I said.

"My Lord!" he said. "What on earth can I do?"

"Hold them in their seats between acts," I answered.

"Don't give anybody a chance to get out in the lobby where they'll hear something. Tell 'em stories—walk on your hands—anything to keep 'em in their seats."

He promised. And he certainly came through on that promise. As one of the best after-dinner speakers in the theatrical world, he was a natural for the assignment. He was never so brilliant, so easy, so humanly entertaining as when he was talking against time in this emergency, conscious all the while of the hundreds dying in agony only a block away. The moment the

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curtain was down, he was out there before the house had a chance to break and behind the curtain the stage-hands were breaking their necks to strike and shift those sets in double-quick time.

As soon as Lackaye was primed, I ran back to the lobby. J. J. Shubert, one of the lessees of the Garrick, was already there. We agreed that the only thing to do was mount guard in the lobby and prevent every human being from leaving or entering the place till the performance was over. Lackaye's masterly performance before the curtain took care of half of that. The other half was tough and Shubert certainly stuck by me. Inside ten minutes our problems began to arrive—people whose wives and mothers and brothers and sisters had come down town to see a show, frantic to know whether they'd gone to the Iroquois or not.

The first arrival was a prominent banker—huge man with a silk hat and a heavy stick, storming in like a tornado. I barred his way.

"Get out of my way!" he said. "I want to know if my wife and daughter are in here."

"Look here," I said, grabbing his arm. "How many more people do you want to kill?"

He stopped and thought a moment, breathing hard.

"Very true, young man," he said, and turned away to stand and wait against the wall without saying another word. For a while it was the same with all the others who came—one word of explanation quieted them down, and they stood and waited out the minutes

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and hours in silence, like condemned criminals. The old fellow opened his face again only when a man who'd already seen what was going on at the Iroquois came tearing in, shouting about his wife and family. I couldn't get anywhere with him—he was all for fighting his way in regardless. The old banker stepped up.

"You'll shut up," he said.

"I've got to get in," replied the fellow. "You don't know who I am. I'm—"

"I don't know who you are," said the old banker, "and I don't care. But if you won't shut up, I'll take care of you the way you deserve." The troublemaker got a squint of the old fellow's shillelagh hanging over his head and quieted down, just in time. If he'd raved on two minutes more, our whole lobbyful would have broken like raw recruits under fire and rushed the door. As it was, they stayed more or less under control till the show was over.

Then the crowd inside began to stream out, most of them chattering about Lackaye's brilliant geniality between acts—a part of the show which they had enjoyed all the more because it was unexpected. The people waiting in the lobby behaved like miners' wives at the mouth of a shaft where there's been an explosion. They peered half-hopefully, half-despairingly in each face as it came out. Now and again a woman would scream out a name and go hang round the neck of somebody she had been afraid she would never see again. As that went on and on, with the audience coming out to face



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this inexplicable hysteria, they began to catch on and joined with the waiting mob to mill round and look and listen. I thought I'd go mad myself before it was over. And, bad as that was, it was nothing to the ordeal of the twenty-five or thirty men and women who never did find their people in our audience. They waited until everybody else had left—asked again and again if we were sure everybody was out of the theater—and then turned whiter still and went out into the cold and down the street to the Iroquois.

If I'd got caught in the theater, I'd have been all right. Anybody experienced in show business would have dived back-stage and down a side-aisle and gone out the stage-door at his leisure—as all the principals of "Bluebeard, Jr.," did. The members of the chorus were in a tighter box. Their dressing-rooms were under the sidewalk and they had to get out through the coal-holes in front of the theater—very curious it looked too, seeing these half-dressed chorus-girls being pulled out of the bowels of the earth. But the paying customers had rushed the same doors they came in by and crushed themselves to death in screaming panic.

New Year's Eve in Chicago, just the day after, was the saddest holiday I ever spent. I went to the Hotel Wellington where there was a big celebration scheduled, with the sixteen English chorus-girls who had been featured in "Bluebeard, Jr.," booked to appear. The girls were there but nobody else was. There was no effort to put on a show or work up any gaiety. The

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hotel set us up to free supper and we just sat and ate, chorus and all, and talked glumly against the silence. It was the same everywhere else that night, they said. Chicago was in mourning.

After that tragedy, of course, the American theater had to do what it should have done long before it had such a grisly warning—install asbestos curtains and doors that open outward and put firemen on the premises during all performances. For years afterward, however, the Iroquois hung on as a grim and abandoned reminder—shunned and talked about in whispers like a haunted house. Visitors to Chicago were always taken to peer at its empty hulk as one of the sights of the city. Again and again they tried to open it for business, hoping that the curse had worn off. First-rate drama failed there, second-rate drama failed, vaudeville failed—and yet it was probably the handsomest and best-designed house in town. Finally, the Freemasons bought it for the site and tore the ill-omened building down.

All that is way back when, of course. But I'm not going to try to bridge the gap between then and now, for the gap represents thirty-odd years with their own set of ups and downs and fun and games. There are more tales in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamed of in the modern generation's philosophy, and some day they'll get their telling. I should, however, like to spin a yarn or two about the beginnings of famous names and events that even the youngsters will recognize.

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My wife, Grace George, early developed a taste for wandering round the waste places of the theater. There is still nothing she enjoys more than an evening in a small vaudeville house or workmen's theater or at a third-rate failure—any language, any location, are all the same to her. Every now and then she returns from one of these expeditions with news of an unknown performer who is worth looking up. Where other ladies shop for antique glass or old prints, she shops for talent, like a scout for a big club doing the minor leagues. And experience has taught me that her eye in such matters is to be taken very seriously indeed. Others know it too. One Christmas not so long ago, I remember, I bought the American rights to "What Every Woman Knows" and presented them to my wife in honor of the season.

"That's not for me, dear," she said. "I could never get round the Scotch dialect. But I know who should do it for you—Helen Hayes. I'd go a long way to see her in it."

I thought that over and began to agree with her. I wasn't worried about my wife's versatility—such varied triumphs of hers as Shaw's "Major Barbara," "Divorçons," "The School for Scandal," and the recent "Kind Lady" would have made that nonsensical. But her kind of comedy wouldn't fit very well with the qualities of Barrie's heroine in "What Every Woman Knows." She excels at the fast-building, vivacious, chin up and tongue-sparkling sort of thing, with wit and

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tears mingled. When I say excels, I am trying to curb a showman's natural tendency to grow rhapsodical about an absolute first-rater. Otherwise I would say that Grace George is the peer of any comedienne who ever made an entrance on the American stage. I would say it if the dramatic critics weren't always saying it for me with literary flourishes that I'm not up to.

I sent for Helen Hayes. At the time she was deep in the high heels and lipstick business—flapper roles. When I mentioned "What Every Woman Knows," she shook her head.

"I'm afraid not," she said. "They'd compare me with Maude Adams, and then where would I be?"

"Well," I said, "I just heard somebody say they'd go a long way to see you do it."

"You mean yourself?" she said dubiously.

"No," I said. "I mean Grace George."

"If Grace George says I can do it," she said, "you can count on me." Three days before the opening I was so enthusiastic about her performance that I promised her her notices would be better than Maude Adams'—and that's exactly what they were.

It was my wife who came home one evening telling me that there were a couple of Russians playing Ibsen in a tiny theater up two flights of stairs somewhere down off Second Avenue—the man, a newcomer named Oleneff, one of the finest she'd ever seen, and the woman, called Alla Nazimova, right behind him. We went down there immediately, saw the performance, which

was magnificent, and asked the pair of them to supper afterwards in a little café next door. During supper we were joined by a bulky, red-headed third party, dressed like a George Belcher cartoon and carrying a fat umbrella, who was introduced as Miss Emma Goldman. I'd never laid eyes on anything like her before. She sat there and talked Red revolution so long and so brilliantly that nothing that has happened since in Russia or the United States either, for that matter, has been any surprise to me. I didn't sign Nazimova, as it happened, because somebody had already spotted her for Henry Miller and he was just twenty-four hours ahead of me.

Douglas Fairbanks was another prize my wife drew out of her theatrical grab-bag. She picked him out of the cast of some dying failure or other, the sort of play that would smother anybody but the most brilliant specimen.

"He's not good-looking," she admitted, when I asked for further details. "But he has a world of personality—just worlds of it." After one look at him I hired him in support of my wife in a play called "Clothes." An odd young man, running over with energy to such an extent that it fatigued me even to look at him sitting down—and he seldom sat. One of the sets for "Clothes" included a long flight of steps to a high platform. During rehearsals, which always wear everybody else to a frazzle, Fairbanks' idea of resting up was to walk up and down that flight of steps on his hands. Presently I



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had him signed to a five-year contract, running over a year in George Broadhurst's "The Man of the Hour" and then teamed with Tom Wise in "The Gentleman from Mississippi." Audiences were taking to him immensely. It was the old matinee-idol racket all over again, except that Fairbanks was a much more virile type than the run of old-fashioned matinee-idols. His list of telephone numbers would have been forty feet long if he'd ever bothered to compile it.

There were some stormy aspects in the handling of Mr. Fairbanks. On one occasion I tore up his contract in front of him. On another his attractiveness to ladies gummed up our arrangements. During the run of "The Man of the Hour" he fell in love with the daughter of the contemporary cotton-king. It's easy to be anonymous about that, since there was a new cotton-king every few months back then when you could corner cotton—it's impossible now. They never lasted long in that game. Well, it was a nice match, but the old gentleman would consent to his daughter's marrying an actor only if he quit the stage and went into a respectable business—the old gentleman to finance and specify the business. I argued that with Fairbanks till I was black in the face, along the lines of the old and thoroughly sound theory that, once you get grease-paint on your face, you have no business anywhere but the theater—particularly when you're going great guns. But Doug was willing to do anything to get the girl, so we parted. I reminded him that, so long as he stayed out of the

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theater, it was all right. But, if he ever tried to come back to the stage, our contract still had some years to run and I'd make him complete it if I had to have him shanghaied from Timbuctoo.

So he got married and his father-in-law set him up in business—which was, of all things, the soap business. I forget the brand of the stuff, but, while it lasted, it was brilliantly advertised on the big electric sign at the head of Longacre Square and everywhere else—they must have spent hundreds of thousands on advertising. A year or so later the cotton-market had one of its private panics—father-in-law was wiped out—the soap business was all washed up when father-in-law's support was withdrawn—and here was son-in-law back prospecting for a paying job in the theater. We resumed our association in a new play by Thompson Buchanan called "The Cub," after my lawyers had made sure of him.

It was in "The Cub" that he first made conspicuous use of his acrobatic ability. In one scene he had to run upstairs in a two-level set and save somebody's life—probably the heroine's.

"Run?" he said, when he first saw the set, "what's the matter with jumping?"

I eyed the twelve-foot gap between stage floor and upper floor and expressed some doubts.

"Why, that's simple," he said, took a little run, caught the edge of the flooring by the stair-opening and pulled up as easy as an alley-cat taking a fence.

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That made a tremendous hit with the audience, but I didn't get the idea. I never did see what an asset Fairbanks' acrobatics were until the movies pointed it out to me. With his first production for Paramount—it was called "In Again, Out Again"—he became the leaping, bounding, balcony-climbing hero of American youth. But in these early stages he was just a highly magnetic juvenile who had a hard time getting on with the rest of the cast, so far as I was concerned.

No doubt Fairbanks' temperament had a good deal to do with the way he got across to an audience. But its regardlessness did not make him popular with his co-workers on the stage, which was unhandy for everybody, including me as manager. It did come in very handy once, however—when I produced that tremendous revival of "The Lights o' London," with a cast including Holbrook Blinn, Marguerite Clarke, Doris Keane, Tom Wise, William Courtney, Lawrance D'Orsay, Jeffries Lewis, Leonore Harris, Thomas Q. Seabrooke—and Fairbanks in the role of Philosopher Jack. His big scene was in a market where he jumped out from behind a cabbage wagon and started battling a crowd of supers single-handed, the curtain coming down on the shindy at its height. It was a fine thing, being just Fairbanks' dish. All the finer because the supers all had it in for him and it was usually anything but a fake fight. Eight times a week they ganged up on him and gave him a good two minutes of brisk battering. Every now and again they got so earnest about it that we had to

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organize an expedition to rescue him after the curtain had fallen. Anybody else would have complained to the management, with some justification. But not Fairbanks—he loved it, and gave the supers just as good as they sent all the way.

Fairbanks means movies, of course, the way Carnegie means steel. There were other spots where the approach of the movies was making itself felt. In fact, it was through me that Adolph Zukor got into pictures. Out in Chicago I had run into a fine racket—a long narrow store on State Street with an entrance fitted up like the observation end of a parlor-car, an interior to match, and a movie-screen at the far end. The customers paid a dime or a quarter admission, climbed in, sat down in the cushioned seats, heard a bell ring and a whistle blow and an air-brake hiss and then saw on the screen a trip through the Rhine Valley or the Grand Canyon. All the while some trick machinery beneath the car was joggling and swaying the whole shebang to give a pretty fair illusion of being on a real railway journey through high-powered scenery. Hale's Tours, it was called, after the fire-chief in Kansas City who made a small fortune out of inventing it.

By this time you can probably figure how closely that kind of gadget was going to nestle up against my heart. I immediately made a deal for half a dozen of the cars and took the notion to Zukor, who was already fairly well known as an entrepreneur of penny-arcades and store-shows in New York. We set up our first car in a

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vacant store next to his arcade on Fourteenth Street, where each outfit would feed customers to the other. Then we formed a corporation and ran the thing into amusement parks all over—Coney Island, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Boston and so forth. Everywhere it went great about six weeks and then died out as the novelty of seeing a Pullman car backing out of a building wore off. As soon as we had to rely on the pictures people stopped coming because, like most travelogues in any period, the pictures were dull.

To keep the thing alive we got hold of "The Great Train Robbery," the first feature picture ever to make real money, and an extraordinary success. That, as a natural combination with our railroad atmosphere, kept us going another six months. But in the end we were \$160,000 in the red. I recommended putting the corporation into bankruptcy before more damage was done. Zukor wouldn't hear of it. He kept saying over and over that he didn't like going into bankruptcy, much as if he'd been remarking he couldn't stand Brussels sprouts. "You go on back to Broadway and look after your own business," he said, "and let me see what I can do." He did it. He ripped out the Pullman car, fixed the stores in all our spots as little theaters seating about one hundred and fifty, kept them open from nine in the morning till midnight every night—and inside two years he'd paid off our \$160,000 and was showing a profit.

After that you couldn't head him. Presently he was



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in my office bubbling over with grandiose ideas about the future of the movie racket. Some sixth sense had convinced him that the day of mere shorts was drawing to a close and full-length features, like "The Great Train Robbery," only far longer and far better, would be the coming thing. Little shooting-galleries were going to give place to huge movie-palaces, such as the legitimate theater had never dreamed of. There were millions and millions in the movies, and he and I were going to start a company to get us in on the ground floor. I was to get twenty-five percent of the stock and a guarantee of \$25,000 cash per annum for the use of my name.

It didn't make sense to me then. Five years later enough of it would have already happened for me to see the point. But back before feature pictures really existed, when there was nothing to the whole industry but terrible products in little doses, cheap methods, nickel and dime admissions—when no actor of any standing would have anything to do with celluloid—Zukor was about the only living human being who could guess what was going to happen.

"Why, Adolph," I said kindly, "you're out of your head. These pictures are just a fad. They won't last much longer than the Mutoscope—or the skating-rink racket." He tried his best to persuade me I was wrong. But I still think the logic of the moment was on my side. So he went to Dan Frohman instead and got him with a good deal less generous proposition than he had

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made to me. And that was how Paramount got its start.

Yes, the new era was beginning to crop out on all sides. A little later, when Zukor and I were taking over dead theaters in odd places and running pictures in them as a small-time speculation, we got hold of a dreary old house in Williamsburg, just across the East River in New York, called the Amphion. It should have been called the White Elephant. After we'd lost a good deal keeping the place open out of nervous habit, Zukor announced one day that he'd found a little fellow who was running store-shows—movies in empty stores—in East New York and wanted to step up in the world by renting a real theater. In other words, he actually wanted to take the Amphion off our hands.

"Where is he?" I shouted. "Don't let him get away."

"He'll keep, he'll keep," said Zukor. "Come round to the Amphion tomorrow evening."

I was there with all my fingers crossed. So was this crazy man from East New York—an undersized and slightly pathetic figure in an overcoat that was none too new and with a walk that reminded me of some of David Warfield's stage-characters.

"Mr. Brady," said Zukor, "meet my friend Marcus Loew."

When you met Marcus Loew, you met the new show-business in person. The only member of the party missing was Guglielmo Marconi.

I passed up my chance to go in with Zukor in

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picture-producing, but that doesn't mean I didn't get head over ears into pictures as soon as they began to look like big-time stuff. Ten or twelve years later I was president of the National Association of the Motion Picture Industry and head of the World Film Corporation at \$100,000 a year. No, life didn't get dull just because times had changed—not so you could notice it. There were always things to tangle up with, things to remember till the cows come home—like the occasion when I accidentally got Woodrow Wilson his first real public ovation.

This was the way of it. I already knew Wilson more or less well—met him first when he attended one of the famous Amen Corner dinners, of which I was chairman. He was governor of New Jersey then and spent his summers at Sea Girt, N. J., coming up to New York every Monday morning on the Sandy Hook boat. I also was a regular passenger on the boat and often had a comfortable chat with the governor on the way up the harbor.

He wasn't an inconspicuous figure, as public men go, but, even after he received the Democratic nomination for the presidency, the public paid him little attention at first. The faces and careers of both Taft and Roosevelt, his two opponents in the campaign, were far better known. One night at a performance of my production of "Bunty Pulls the Strings" at the Comedy Theater in New York, I looked out through the curtain peep-hole and saw Mr. Wilson and his



WILLIAM A. BRADY AS "STEPHEN ASHE"  
*in "A Free Soul" at the Playhouse, 1928*





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brother in the third row—and not a soul in the audience paying any attention to the presence in the house of the Democratic candidate. That obviously wasn't right. I thought it over and took steps.

I called up the leading lady of the company, a charming little Highland Scotch girl named Molly McIntyre—that cast had been imported bodily from Scotland—pointed out Mr. Wilson through the peephole and gave her instructions. Then I sent round a boy to a florist's to buy a bunch of heather. The florist had never even heard of heather and a bunch of violets was the best he could do as a substitute. But that was all right. Dandelions would have worked just as well.

At the end of the second act Miss McIntyre went on for her curtain call and then, while I held the curtain, she leaned over the footlights, smiled straight at Mr. Wilson and tossed the violets neatly into his lap:

"To a wee bonnie laddie, the next president of the United States," she said. The house looked at the place where the violets had landed, gasped, and broke into a storm of applause. Then they got to their feet, cheering wildly, and ladies in the boxes began taking off their corsages and throwing them at Mr. Wilson to supplement the violets. He just smiled and remained seated, which made them wilder than ever. At the end of the performance it took half an hour to clear the house because every customer in the place insisted on going up and shaking hands with the great man.

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Even after we got the house clear, the audience hung round outside to get another look at him as he came out. I offered Mr. Wilson the use of my car, which was parked outside the theater, to make his escape in.

"No, thank you," he said, "I'm walking. But there is one thing you can do for me. Take me back-stage and introduce me to Bunty."

Back we went and I got Miss McIntyre out of her dressing-room protesting because her hair was all disordered and her face covered with cold cream, which I hadn't given her time to rub off. Mr. Wilson put a burr in his tongue and thanked her in good Scots for the violets and the prophecy.

"Why, Mr. Wilson," she said, "I didn't know you were Scotch."

"Scotch by descent," he said. "Couldn't you tell by the cut of my jib?"

By the time we got out on the sidewalk, the crowd had tripled in size, and met him with another rousing cheer. He ducked off and started to walk home, over to Fifth Avenue and up to the University Club, where he was staying. But the crowd wouldn't let it go at that. They all followed along, hundreds of them trooping after him all the way—a regular triumphal procession—and as fast as he walked, they kept right with him. It was the first example of that magnetism which the war-president afterward came to exercise over the whole American people. It's my private

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opinion that, of all the cheering crowds he ever met, this spontaneous mob was the one that pleased him most—because that sort of thing was then absolutely new to him.

In due time, besides, I was finding myself the father of a brilliant young actress. Alice Brady, my daughter, came out of a New Jersey convent having convinced the sisters that her singing voice demanded professional cultivation. When she was sent to the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston, the teachers there were even more enthusiastic. They said, in fact, that Alice had a fine chance of becoming a grand-opera star, if she'd work hard, by the time she was twenty-eight or so. She had no objection to being a grand-opera star, but twenty-eight always sounds like a million years away to a girl in her teens. So the first I knew she was all set to quit the conservatory and join up as a chorus-singer in Colonel Henry W. Savage's small-time comic opera company at Castle Square in Boston. I hit the ceiling at that project. She hit the ceiling immediately after I did. We had it hammer and tongs for a while—and the only way I finally squelched her scheme was by reminding her that she was under age and there was nothing to prevent me from shipping her off to a convent near the North Pole. That was no mere rhetoric. I knew of a fine convent way up north of Ottawa where an aunt of mine had been Sister Superior.

But Alice had her share of the family stubbornness

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and the family nerve at getting away with things. I found that out the first time when she wheedled me into putting her on the ship's concert bill during an Atlantic crossing—and she came out and rendered a grand-opera aria with all the aplomb of a Metropolitan prima donna. The second eye-opener came when she cajoled me—and how she managed it I don't know yet—into casting her, a complete novice with no stage experience whatever, as one of the three little girls from school in my top-notch production of "The Mikado." That cast included DeWolf Hopper, Fritz Scheff, Christie MacDonald and Christine Neilson—first-raters all. And pitchforking my daughter into a crucial spot in that kind of show just because she was my daughter didn't fit with my style at all.

I didn't like it and neither did the company, for which I can't blame them in the least. During rehearsals, I was told, the chorus-girls conspired to make life miserable for the boss' daughter. I didn't know about that myself because, out of an inability to face the music, I stayed away from rehearsals. It was all I could do to drag myself round to sit in the balcony the opening night. All during the opening chorus and the wandering minstrel song I felt like the last of peatime, with nothing to look forward to but the spectacle of my daughter making an amateurish hash of things in brilliant company. When Yum-Yum and Pitti Sing and Peep-Bo made their first entrance, I hardly dared look at the stage. When I did look, my

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eyes popped open and stayed that way the rest of the performance. Here was Alice, dancing and singing right along with two of the best performers in New York and holding her own with no more effort than if she'd just been walking down the street. Every gesture was professional, every step neat and clean and charming, every note clear and sharp as Gilbert and Sullivan should be—she had style and presence and a technical ability I'd never dreamed of. You'd have sworn she'd been on the stage ten years and sung "The Mikado" once a week for five seasons.

After the performance I went back-stage, and with tears in my eyes, told her she'd won. Bill Brady's daughter was a chip off the old block and was going places. She was certainly going places if she'd walk chalk for me. That came a little hard for her at times. When I stepped her down to a one-line bit in a production called "The Balkan Princess," there was some trouble with discipline. But she was game to ride the bumps and learn the business as it should be learned, taking a forty-week tour with Hopper's Gilbert and Sullivan troupe next season, a tour studded with one-night stands and good old-fashioned theatrical roughing it. She is a troupier by birth. She still is, now that critics call her one of the great American actresses. In pictures of late she's been specializing in frivolous comedy roles. But there's still any amount of the old-time versatility there as well. It isn't every famous actress who can turn her hand to everything with tremen-



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dous effect, all the way from light opera to the heaviest of serious stuff.

And it wasn't only a famous wife and a famous daughter who kept me up with the times and sometimes a little ahead of them. Such universal infections as the World War and the Coolidge market naturally found somebody of my temperament wide open for the punch, if you don't mind a mixed metaphor. When President Wilson wanted somebody to co-ordinate the movie industry with the rest of the nation in fighting the war, I got the call for the job—and I was mixed up with the late-lamented stock-market boom the way Br'er Rabbit was entangled with the tar-baby. I'd been a ticker-fiend since the turn of the century. On the historic occasion in 1901 when Northern Pacific hit 1000, I was having a swell time as an amateur member of what was known as the Waldorf crowd—including John W. Gates and Jim Blaine, Jr., and Augustus Heinze, also Oscar, the Waldorf headwaiter—who forgathered daily in the sumptuous offices of McIntyre & Marshall to watch the board and play ducks and drakes with millions. I wasn't in for millions exactly, but Northern Pacific's mercurial temperament cost me \$75,000, I remember, and would have cost me hundreds of thousands more that I couldn't have paid if I hadn't got out before the absolute worst happened.

But that didn't cure me. And when, to quote *Variety*, Wall Street laid an egg in 1929, I was out \$350,-

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ooo. I was literally bowled over—no figure of speech about it. For six months I was flat on my back in bed and for a long time after that they had my legs in a plaster cast. The cure for that calamity was a script that came into my office one afternoon just after Sam Harris had forfeited it with a long record of rejections from practically every first-rate manager in New York. The author had entitled it "Street Scene." It cost me \$6000 to produce and the profits came to a cool half-million and the movie rights sold for \$165,000 more. At that rate the mortgage on the Playhouse, my theater, could be paid off and everything else cleaned up. Shortly afterward some fast work by transatlantic telephone enabled me to beat the other fellows to securing the rights for St. John Irvine's "The First Mrs. Fraser"—which, with Grace George in the lead, meant a year of gloriously profitable business.

The medicine had been severe this time, but it had turned the trick at last. I haven't looked at a ticker for eight years, and I don't intend to if I live for eighty more. But I don't need the stimulus of a major panic to keep me in the theatrical running. One of these days another "Street Scene" or "The First Mrs. Fraser" will come along and we'll go to town with it and I'll go out in a blaze of glory.

Or maybe it will be some other way. I'm already a radio veteran. I've never been able to see any point in squawking because new inventions make changes in the old business of keeping the box-office open.

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I hope that attitude gives me the right to answer the question we started with a while back—the question raised by the young folks who wrote in after one of my radio programs complaining that modern youngsters don't have those kinds of opportunities. I think I've changed my mind since we began this yarn. As I've looked back over these antics of mine, I don't see what's to prevent a youngster from riding the bumps the same way and making just as much out of this new situation. If a young fellow wants to stick around big cities and compete with the rest of the sheep who don't know any better than to keep jumping fences where the pasture's all worn out by crowding, naturally he'll miss tricks. But it strikes me that, if he cuts loose and finds himself a spot that's not so crowded—if he's willing to take a chance, whether it's with a tent-show or a silver mine—luck and bull-headedness will probably see him through in the old style. It is Louis instead of Sullivan, the quintuplets instead of the Seven Sutherland Sisters and the Townsend Plan instead of the single tax—but for all that it looks very much like the same world to me. And maybe these yarns of what happened to one youngster in his first forty years alone will cheer up the new crop.



























